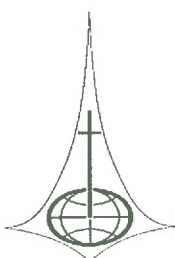


20 YEARS AFTER THE SYSTEM CHANGE – CHURCH AND STATE IN SOCIETIES IN TRANSFORMATION

**LWF European Consultation
in Budapest/Hungary,
June 26–29, 2009**



THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION
A COMMUNION OF CHURCHES

LUTHERISCHER WELTBUND – FEDERACIÓN LUTERANA MUNDIAL – FÉDÉRATION LUTHÉRIENNE MONDIALE

The opinions expressed in this publication reflect the views of the authors
and not necessarily those of the Lutheran World Federation

Edited by:

LWF – Department for Mission and Development

Cover photo:

© Zsuzsanna Bolla/ELCH

Layout:

LWF Office for Communication Services

Published by:

The Lutheran World Federation – A Communion of Churches

Women in Church and Society

Route de Ferney 150

P.O.Box 2100

1211 Geneva 2

info@lutheranworld.org

**20 YEARS AFTER
THE SYSTEM CHANGE
– CHURCH AND
STATE IN SOCIETIES IN
TRANSFORMATION.**

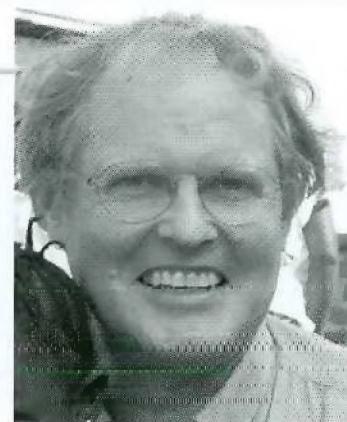
**LWF European Consultation in Budapest/
Hungary, June 26 – 29, 2009**

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	3
INTRODUCTION	5
WELCOME ADDRESS	7
PART I.....	9
PART II	
EAST-WEST INTEGRATION: A CASE STUDY.....	20
PART III	
THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT IN TRANSFORMATION	27
PART IV	
STRENGTH OF THE CHURCH AS AN ACTOR IN CIVIL SOCIETY	36
PART V:	
LUTHERAN SPIRITUALITY AS A GIFT TO SOCIETY	53
OPENING WORSHIP	69
SUNDAY WORSHIP	71
CHURCH AND STATE IN SOCIETIES IN TRANSFORMATION IN EUROPE.....	74
CONTRIBUTORS	77
PARTICIPANTS LIST.....	78
20 YEARS AFTER THE SYSTEM CHANGE – CHURCH AND STATE IN SOCIETIES IN TRANSFORMATION	80

FOREWORD

Jaap Schep



This report reflects the outcome of a series of meetings in which representatives of European churches analyzed various aspects of “church and state” relationships.

What is striking in these detailed analyses and reflections, is the enormous diversity and the constantly changing societies in the European continent.

Two major historic processes are the background for these reflections: the 20 years that have passed since the fall of the Iron Curtain on the one hand, and the ongoing development or coming into being of the European Union.

Within these political developments there are two important social processes that emerge and submerge in a constant flow that is slightly different in the various countries: a proceeding process of secularization, as part of globalization trends on the one hand and on the other a smaller scale development where religion and more clearly spirituality are re-discovered, while established churches like the Lutherans struggle to respond to these emerging needs.

All reports address both a thematic concern and a specific national situation. And again the diversity is striking. Whether it concerns countries in Central Eastern Europe (Slovenia, Hungary, Croatia, Russia and Latvia), or Western Europe (the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Italy), or reflections on Europe in general, the reports reflect the many different cultures and religious settings that characterize this small continent. In all reports, however, we can see evidence of committed people who try to find

relevant expressions of being a witnessing and active church in their society. In all reflections the participants try to discern the role of their church vis à vis the state as a political entity and a social body.

The intriguing story line implicit in this report is that all these experiences and efforts play a role in a new melting pot¹, the Europe after 1989 and after the treaty of Maastricht; a developing European Union that struggles with its religious and ecclesial heritage. So much so that it could not come to agreement on this issue in the context of a draft constitutional document. While churches and religious struggles have played such a strong role in Europe’s history, it is yet to be seen whether the religious nature of humankind remains recognized in the 21st century; and more importantly, whether God’s Good News remains audible and visible in this old continent. There is a challenge for strong and clear Christian witness in Europe!

May these country reports encourage you! I hope and pray that through our cooperation in the Lutheran Communion the holistic mission of all member churches in Europe, whether they are large or small, will be strengthened.

¹ Reference is made to the United States, which as an immigrant country was described as a melting pot of different nationalities and cultures

INTRODUCTION

Eva-Sybille Vogel-Mfato



Walking together to discern joint challenges for witness

It is one of the well-known Easter stories: Two men are walking the road to Emmaus, after the most dramatic upheaval of their lives. A few years before, they had become disciples of a great hope figure of their time: Jesus of Nazareth. It seemed that with him, a new world was on the horizon where humanity would be reconciled with God and one another. This great perspective seemed shattered on the cross of Golgotha. Numbed, the two men were on their way home when another traveler joined and took up dialogue with them, listening to what had happened and seeking together how it was to be discerned. The story leads into the recognition of Christ in their very midst.

The Emmaus story is the central reference of the LWF document on Mission in Context—Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment, “Using the Emmaus road model of mission as being on a journey together, as accompaniment, this document invites Lutheran churches and other churches to engage in a theology that reflects and draws from their contextual mission experience.” (p. 61)

Church renewal since the system change

A fundamental starting point in churches’ self-perception of their missional calling is how they relate to their surrounding context in society. When the Iron Curtain was lifted, churches in Europe lived a time filled with enthusiasm and great hopes for a new, and finally reconciled house of Europe where the churches would play an active and important role in building up democratic and sustainable societies. And, indeed, these past 20 years have been a successful time with great achievements of renewal.

Over those years, Lutheran churches in Europe and beyond have accompanied one another in discernment and shared hope. In a first phase, reconstruction of church structures and buildings was a major focus in Central and Eastern Europe. In a second step, church constitutions were rewritten and legal agreements negotiated with emerging post-communist governments. In many Central Eastern countries, state “neutrality” toward religion changed from former hostility (under communism) to open interest in the contribution of religion to culture and society. In contemporary civil society models, churches are expected to assume their own roles as actors, among others, in civil society. Also under the European Union legislation, both new opportunities and challenges opened up for churches’ witness and service in society.

Ongoing challenges

At the same time, churches were confronted with new and unexpected difficulties. Hopes remained unfulfilled, new crosses had to be carried, both in church and society. Meanwhile, under the impact of globalization and secularization, not only Eastern European, but also Western and Nordic churches now find themselves before new challenges. With decreasing membership, majority and state churches are confronted with loss of traditionally held authority in their societies.

Throughout Europe, dialogue with people of other faiths and ideologies is becoming a central concern for conviviality and witness. Within-country, cross-European and global migration for economic and professional reasons impact local communities and church structures. Hospitality, inclusion of the stranger, the church as

a welcoming home in foreign contexts—such are contemporary elements in discernment processes for witness, service and communion.

Living in these multi-faceted decades of transformation, the Lutheran World Federation has served the churches in offering platforms where they can share, compare, and learn from their experiences. Since 2006, the LWF Europe Desk has organizing four workshops involving participants from member churches in all European subregions. A concluding consultation on a pan-European level was held in Budapest/Hungary in 2009. This document is the outcome of that encounter.

As members of the global Lutheran communion, European churches do not stand alone, but are interwoven into a worldwide network of churches who accompany each other as they search to fulfill their calling to witness. European churches need the experiences and learning processes from sister churches in other regions. They need to walk together the road to Emmaus. As an African participant at the Budapest consultation underlined, “We must continue to learn from each other to broaden our perspectives and horizons of the Christian family within the global context.” He goes on to emphasize the need of

learning from the mistakes made in the colonial past, all the way down to contemporary tensions in Christian–Muslim relationships.

Another common challenge is the global political and economic inter-connectedness among nations and continents, and the repercussions of European nations’ policies on churches’ lives in other world regions. Churches in Europe carry responsibility as advocates for human rights and justice, also for their sisters and brothers afar. What happened once and still happens in and through Europe, has decisive influences on the rest of the world, including on Christian communion.

Thus, mission in context is a complex challenge for the churches in Europe as they seek for new expressions of being churches in their societies, and in a world in transformation. The consultative process which led to the conference in Budapest, Hungary, in June 2009 gives witness to this. With this documentation, we invite the readers to join the Lutheran communion in Europe as it walks the road of discernment together with Christ, and to enjoy together Emmaus moments when, while sharing their material, intellectual, and spiritual resources, their eyes are opened and they recognize the Lord in their midst.

WELCOME ADDRESS

Tibor Fabiny

Dear sisters and brothers, ladies and gentlemen!

On behalf of the Lutheran Church in Hungary it is my great pleasure to welcome the participants of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) European Conference on Church and State in Societies in Transformation.

Over the past three years, you have been organizing subregional programs on this issue, and we now conclude with a European consultation here at the Evangelical Lutheran University, Budapest. Let me extend a most hearty welcome to all of you!

It was exactly 25 years ago that, for the first time behind the Iron Curtain, our small minority church hosted the LWF Seventh Assembly here in Budapest. At the time no one dared to dream that in five short years the totalitarian regimes of Eastern Europe would collapse like a deck of cards. Is this not a clear sign that it is not we human beings but our Creator, the Triune God, who is in charge of history?

The year 1989 marked the beginning of a new world order

Just 10 days ago we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the reburial of the martyrs of the 1956 revolution.

Next weekend we shall remember that 20 years ago East Germans were allowed to cross the borders of Hungary and Austria to be reunited with their West German relatives.

And in the autumn, we shall commemorate the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Ceausescu regime in Romania.

Twenty years is almost an entire generation. But our focus is not on what happened 20 years ago but what has happened—or what has not happened—within the past 20 years, and how the church has

responded to the challenges of this “brave new world.”

Not only has former Eastern Europe changed, but so too has Western Europe and, especially, “this great globe” itself.

It is our impression that everything is on the move, everything is in transformation: the economy, politics and society.

The “great euphoria” seems to have disappeared

Our little world, once again, has been visited by world crises. We feel threatened.

The most recent elections to the European Parliament have not eased our fears. Once again, a crisis has resulted in the sudden emergence and strengthening of cheap, populist and dangerous tendencies in the political discourse—the intensification of right-wing radicalism. This is not what we dreamed of 20 years ago. In Hungary, this move to the right was, sadly, also the result of seven years of being governed by a nominally socialist but de facto wild capitalist political elite.

How should our churches respond to these changes? The church should be aware of the lurking dangers.

Two days ago I found in my mail box the most recent book of the American Lutheran church historian Eric Gritsch, *Toxic Spirituality*, in which he discusses four enduring temptations of Christian faith: anti-Semitism, fundamentalism, triumphalism and moralism.

They are, Gritsch says, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

We could even find some more horses in our own European countries: nihilism, cynicism, apathy, relativism.



Churches should indeed respond to this new situation. But we should remember that the church is, or, should be, different from the world.

We are called to be the salt of the earth

Our agenda should not be dictated by the world or by the culture around us but by the head of our body, Jesus Christ.

We should be aware that church leaders during the communist era frequently let politics dictate the agenda of the church. They conformed. They did not want to lag behind. And the result was the inner ero-

sion of the churches. But the church survived because the church is more than its temporal leaders.

The church history of the last century is written for our understanding, as the “good old ‘Lutheran’ St Paul” said in 1 Corinthians 10.

We must, therefore, have the courage to be different and we must find the Christian center.

We know that the world changes but that the Word of God remains steadfast. And according to the Article VII of the Augsburg Confession: that “one holy church will remain forever.”

Dear sisters and brothers, may God bless our fruitful consultations at the conference!

On behalf of the host church, I declare this conference to be opened.

PART I

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 4 SUB-REGIONAL WORKSHOPS HELD BETWEEN 2006 AND 2008 ON CHURCH-STATE RELATIONSHIPS IN TRANSITIONAL CONTEXTS OF SOCIETIES

Workshop of Southeast European Member Churches Moravske Toplice, Slovenia, 9 – 10 October 2006

Annette Leis Peters



Setting

The setting and hospitality connected with this workshop offered the right atmosphere for both intense work and discussion, and personal encounters among the participants. We met at Bishop Geza Ernisa's house in Moravske Toplice, a Slovenian health resort. We had the opportunity to get to know the multifaceted activities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Slovenia, which is a minority church in Slovenia but an important influence in the region. Through study visits to different parishes and other church endeavors we learned how the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Slovenia tries to adapt its activities to the conditions of the region where most of its member live. It is a region with several health resorts, but which is at the same time economically underdeveloped compared to the rest of the country.

The presentations and discussions within the working group showed that the conditions in which the various Lutheran churches minister differ considerably in the countries of Southeast Europe. This was particularly noted in relationship to the ability of delegates to participate in the workshop. Colleagues from Serbia faced major obstacles in obtaining visas.

- the Lutheran World Federation (LWF)—Department for Mission and Development (DMD), Europe Secretary;
- the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Croatia;
- the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Italy;
- the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Romania;
- the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Serbia;
- the Church of Sweden.

Highlights from the discussion

The following pages attempt to give some highlights of the workshop rather than summarize the situation in every country. I will present some of the most important challenges and opportunities we discussed in Moravske Toplice based on my interpretation.

Challenges

Southeast Europe does not deal with church–state relations in a uniform way. This is particularly the case when it comes to the relationship between state and minority churches. There are considerable differences in legal, political and social

Participants

The participants came from:

- the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Slovenia;

conditions. One of the most obvious differences is the case of the Lutheran Church in Italy, which did not face a period of transition from post-communist to democratic rule. Moreover, the relationship between majority churches and minority churches differs from country to country and from society to society. The most complicated situation is in Romania and Serbia, where the Lutheran churches faced considerable challenges.

Formation of a new state and a new society

The formation of a new post-communist society implies the search for a new identity. Important questions have been asked, including: How will the new state relate to the old state? Is continuity possible when a new state develops from a totalitarian system? Which institutions become centers of reference?

Religion and ethnicity

When a new national identity is needed to build a new state and a new society the majority ethnic group tends to have its identity equated with the national identity. Majority religion is often closely linked to majority ethnicity.

In the case of Romania, the Orthodox Church has acted as a state church even though freedom of religion has been legally established and the country is moving towards the separation of church and state. The close connection between the state and the Orthodox Church can be difficult for minority religions, in particular for new religious groups.

Coming to terms with the past

Coming to terms with a nation's totalitarian past is an important task for the whole society. But this might be most acute for religious minorities who suffered from severe persecution. As society in general might not have the same need to deal with these issues, minority religions can once again get into the position of being isolated.

Minority religion and majority religion

In all of the countries discussed, the social, political and legal changes brought improvement for the Lutheran churches. Often they were recognized by the state as historical churches.

Still, the majority churches in all the countries in Southeast Europe remain in a more privileged position. This creates challenges both in terms of any co-operation with the majority church and in dealings with society in general.

The need to adapt to church organizations and church work to the new conditions

Even positive changes in society, such as holding a better legal and social position and having property returned, imply that there is the need for fundamental changes. Church organization and church work have to be adapted to the new situation. Returned church buildings have to be taken care of without absorbing all the resources of the minority church.

The need to adapt the church identity to the social and political changes

Even positive changes—such as having a better position in society, more religious rights and freedoms and more resources—have to be dealt with. If the changes include unexpected or less positive developments, like the migration of the majority of the church members to Western countries, conflicts and separation within the churches and parishes can be a consequence.

Opportunities

New religious rights and freedoms

The social and political changes which took place during the past 20 years have improved the conditions for all churches participating in the workshop to different extents. Both individuals related to minority churches and minority church bodies have gained more rights and freedoms to practice their religion. This applies as much to a country in which a strong majority church used to dominate the field of religion (cf. Italy), as it does to post-communist societies. Among other things, it has become more possible and likely for minority churches to open up to new groups in society.

Possibility to be more visible in society

During several decades Lutheran churches in Southeast Europe were used to working without

attracting attention, often in an almost hidden way. The conditions have changed considerably in this respect. In some of the countries, the Lutheran church is now almost expected to participate in the public debate. This is the case in Slovenia. Often their contributions are welcome. Some Lutheran churches are even experiencing a re-emergence of interest in their activities and in Lutheran theology. This is the case in Italy. The social work of Lutheran churches is now broadly appreciated by society. This is the case in Croatia. Activities in this field could easily be expanded in many countries.

New forms of cooperation

Having a new position—often acknowledged by the state—makes it easier for Lutheran churches to commit themselves to cooperation with other churches or with other actors in society. Cooperation is possible in the political, social

and cultural fields, and with regard to worship. Through these collaborative operations Lutheran churches can not only reach new groups in society but they can also enrich and inspire their own work theologically, spiritually, politically, socially and on a practical level.

International connections and networking

Last, but not least, the end of the Iron Curtain has multiplied the opportunities to relate to and to cooperate with Lutheran churches in other countries. In many of the churches cooperation with international partners has developed and expanded in the area of welfare and *diakonia*. Having in mind that more and more decisions are taken and more and more work is done on an international level, this cooperation is likely to be intensified. This last point may be an important discussion thread during this conference.



Workshop of Central European Member Churches in Svätý Jur, Slovakia, 24 - 26 June 2007

Gábor Orosz

Church-state relations and constitutions

Our discussions focused on the various arrangements regarding church-state relations and constitutions around the world, which we classified into several broad categories. The first group has systems where there is a separation of church and state. The constitutions of Poland, Hungary and Slovakia proclaim the neutrality of the state with respect to religion.

Hungary's Church Act of 1990 enshrined freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. At that time Hungary was still ruled by one party, i.e., the communists. The law reflected constitutional principles that talk about the separation of state and church. Hence the Hungarian system is based on the separation of state and church or the equality of religions.

What do we mean by separation? Two models may help clarify this. There is a strong separation of church and state in the United States and in France, but they operate in completely opposite ways. In the U.S., church and state are separate to protect churches from the state. In France, however, the separation of church and state protects the state from the church. The latter model comes out of the history of the 18th and 19th centuries, where the dominant church, the Roman Catholic Church, was basically anti-democratic.

In a nutshell, in the communist era separation of church and state in our countries was an "adverse separation model," after 1989 we can talk about a "friendly separation model".

Concordat with the Vatican

The Polish Sejm, the lower house of the country's parliament, voted to ratify the disputed 1993 concordat with the Vatican in a breakthrough

welcomed by church leaders as heralding a "new era" in church-state relations. Poland had become the first post-communist country to give church rights treaty-level protection in three accords with the Vatican. These covered a range of areas, from Catholic social and charitable activities to Catholic schools and associations.

Minority churches in Poland—such as the Lutherans—said that they expected the same rights and welcomed the formation of a government commission to handle ties with the Polish Ecumenical Council. Addressing the council at its Warsaw offices in January 1993, the Lutheran Jerzy Buzek first president of the European Parliament, pledged that state relations with its seven member churches would be guided by the principles of "equal rights, autonomy and cooperation."

In May 1997, Hungary became the second Eastern European country with a full-scale treaty on funding church activities with a promise that the country's 77 other registered denominations and faiths would be assured similar rights.

Under its complex provisions, most churches and sacred buildings confiscated by Hungary's communist regime after 1948 would be returned by the year 2011, with compensation provided for the rest.¹

The country's 20 Lutheran schools would be entitled to the same subsidies as state schools, while Lutherans would be permitted to assign one per cent of their taxes to the church.

Providing social welfare services

The institutional model for church-state relations in Eastern Europe is one of close cooperation between

¹ Jonathan Luxmoore: Eastern Europe 1997–2000: a Review of Church Life. in: *Religion, State & Society*, Vol. 29, No. 4, 2001.

the state and the churches or other religious bodies. Typically, our churches have funded religious schools and diaconal institutions since 1989.

The government and religious agencies work as partners in providing social welfare services.

Financial support from the state

Churches in our countries receive official sanction and financial support from the state, though ideas of religious liberty differ. While people generally agree on the need for religious freedom, they tend to define it differently.

Slovakia, as part of Czechoslovakia, followed the more than 100-year-old Austro-Hungarian model, which had automatically been adopted by the Czechoslovak Republic. The state financed the wages of the pastors and the teachers of religion. This model was adopted also by communist Czechoslovakia, but the state used it to coerce pastors and people who participated in the work of churches. After more than 100 years of this psychological exploitation, it was not easy to find a workable model and after 1989, it basically remained unchanged.

We saw that to find a good model for church-state relation is never simple; it always depends on people's mentality as well as the atmosphere of the era. My colleagues from Slovakia said they really needed a new model that works for a small church.

The Italian model appears to be the most acceptable starting point. There the "otto per mille" of the state tax system contributes to church and to charity work budgets.

National identity and Lutherans

Some Eastern European governments or parties have generally tied religion more closely to the state, viewing religious expression as a matter of national identity. This makes sense given the lack of ethnic and religious homogeneity in many Eastern European states, such as Hungary and Slovakia. In these countries, the Lutherans often belong to

ethnic and religious minorities. They are not strong representatives of the national identity.

Christian values in society

Another issue discussed was the Christian understanding of values, and the adoption of these values in society. What are these values and how should they be named?

In Poland, the issue which created a sharp public debate was the right to life, which ultimately concluded with the adoption of the country's abortion law.

In recent decades, some new ethical issues have risen in most of the countries, such as stem cell research. The question raised was, to what extent has the state the right and responsibility to regulate these developments. Questions also arose around whether or not these issues should be included in the Christian school curricula.

We also debated whether church leaders should take part in the public discourse on social questions. If they are to participate, what kinds of interests should they stand for? All participants said that churches have the right to address political issues and express their opinions. On the other hand, it is difficult to say how this kind of intervention might affect the behavior of believers.

In Hungary, for instance, 90 percent of the population rejects the presence of the church in politics. The aim of all religion is to try to guide and control the life of believers in their daily life as well as to convince them (and non-believers) to follow those particular church doctrines.²

A very significant discussion focused on the integration of our countries into the European Union. There have been deep and extensive debates on the role of Christianity and religion in Europe. The drafting of a European Constitution is underway and it will address questions surrounding European heritage and history, and its relationship to Christianity and other religions in Europe.

² State and Church. Free Church in Free Country www.visegradgroup.eu/main.php?folderID=1120

Reckoning the communist past

The final theme of discussion was the communist past and how it is being dealt with in Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Poland. But it

remains a controversial topic. In 2001 the Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary agreed to put this sensitive topic on the agenda with just a one vote majority.

Workshop of the Baltic and Russian Member Churches—Church and State in Post-Soviet Countries Fifteen Years After Perestroika, St. Petersburg, Russia, 24-25 April 2008

Linards Rozentals

The regional conference took place on 24-25 April in St. Petersburg, Russia, organized by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in cooperation with the two Lutheran churches in Russia and with the permission of the St. Petersburg department in charge of relations with religious organizations. The participants included representatives from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia and Other States, the Lutheran Church of Ingria and the Evangelical Lutheran Churches of Latvia and Lithuania. The main topic of discussions was church-state relations during the past 15 to 20 years. Each of these churches experienced severe persecutions, heavy restrictions or a total banning of activities under the communist regime.

At the end of the conference, the final document called for the establishment of a national committee for cooperation with LWF in Russia. This document will be of crucial importance in strengthening Lutheranism in Russia.

Spiritual health of society and ethics as challenges to the church

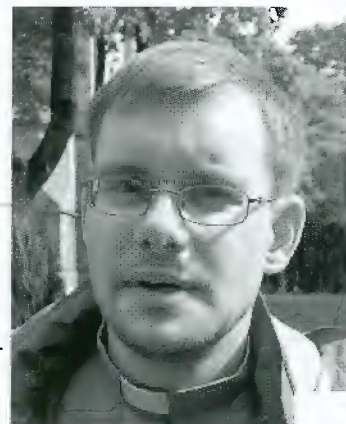
The final document stated that relations between church and state play an important role in developing a society and that the church should take responsibility for the spiritual health of the society in the face of rapidly growing consumerism, stereotypes and spiritual nihilism. It was pointed out that the traditional problems between church and state need to be explored in the context both of Russia and Europe. The traditional Lutheran understanding concerning relations between church and the teaching about the two kingdoms should continue to guide theological discussions on the issue. It is the right of the church to evalu-

ate the acts of the State from a moral and ethical perspective. It is also important to consult with other religious organizations and learn from their experience how to improve advocacy efforts on creating better legislation on property rights, Christian education, military service and other issues. In contemporary society, the church's mission is spiritual renewal and therefore it should play an active role in the social and diaconal spheres.

Russia: Reconstruction and public acknowledgement of historic churches

The Lutheran Church of Ingria, which until 1917 had about 150 000 parish members around St. Petersburg and Karelia, was persecuted by the Soviet regime. Parish members were deported to Siberia, and because of this the church was not able to restore the first two parishes until the 1970s under the supervision of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Estonia. At that time it was impossible to re-establish connections with its historical partners in the Church of Finland. In 1990, a special deanery was formed to nurture the 15 parishes of Ingermanland. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria was officially founded in 1992 with the Synod as the leading institution meeting once a year. Today, there are 75 parishes in the church in seven deaneries, and about 100 prayer groups have been established within the historical territory of the Lutheran Church of Ingria and elsewhere in Russia.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Russia was established in 1924 after the crash of Russian Empire and the Bolshevik revolution which led to the start of the Soviet regime. Therefore it has had a very complicated relationship with the



state. During the time of the Russian Empire, all activities of the Lutheran churches were regulated by a special law concerning the Evangelical Lutheran Church issued in 1832. Churches in the Baltic States were also affected. The law lost its effect after 1917. A new law in 1917 took away all church properties, and in 1918 the churches were separated from the state and the education system. So the Lutheran church that had been part of the state structure and government and lead by the General Consistory under the Ministry of Internal Affairs and six local consistories (in Russia, Estonia and Latvia) lost their structure and leadership. In 1924, the Constitution became the founding document for consolidation of the parishes. During the Soviet regime, there was no centralized leadership and therefore about 500 parishes were left isolated after the collapse of the regime and had the opportunity to join together in one church. This proved to be a very difficult and time-consuming task. The collapse of the Soviet Union created major problems and challenges for the church. In 1991, the General Synod adopted the Constitution of 1924 with some amendments. In 1991, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia (with its membership of German descent) was established in the territory of the former Soviet Union. In the 1990s regional church structures were formed in Ukraine, Siberia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Local synods were established, creating church divisions or eparchies governed by superintendents, deans or visitators. The Synod of 1994 adopted some amendments to the Constitution based on the new situation, and the first stage of creating the structure of Evangelical Lutheran Church of Russia and Other States was completed. This meant that a unified structure of Lutheran churches in Russia and other former Soviet Union territories (except the Baltic countries) was established. The new Constitution and structure of the church offered long-term security featuring legally independent, regional churches led by bishops and governed by an archbishop. By adopting such a structure, a balance was established between political and legal interests and church unity was achieved in parishes and in different countries. Currently the main issue for both Lutheran churches in Russia is

the acknowledgement of Lutheran denomination as traditional and deeply historical churches that receive treatment equal to that received by the Russian Orthodox Church. That would mean the returning of church properties so that they can be used for church activities.

New independence for churches in the Baltic countries

The Baltic countries (Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania) gained independence from Russia after World War I, and independent Lutheran churches were then established with new structures, constitutions, organizations and leadership.

Lithuania

In Lithuania, an independent Lutheran church was established in 1920 with about 80,000 members, who were predominantly Germans and Lithuanians of German origin. In Lithuania, where the leading denomination is the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestants (Lutheran and Reformed) were and still are a minority. In 1944, more than half of the members of the Lutheran parishes and about 80 percent of the pastors went into exile. In Lithuania and the other Baltic countries, the church suffered a great deal as the church properties were confiscated, theological educational institutions closed, intelligentsia deported and other repressive measures executed.

In Lithuania, the Evangelical Lutheran Church is one of the traditional denominations in the country, and therefore enjoys some privileges. However, church properties are not being returned despite the government's stated policy to do so. Properties are not being returned to the Roman Catholic Church either, except the church buildings, though the rest of the church properties are at the disposal of the church. Parishes are well attended but the ministers are in difficult financial situation. The Lutheran church enjoys a leading position in Taurage and Klaipeda. In the rest of Lithuania the church remains in a minority position.

Latvia

In Latvia, the Evangelical Lutheran Church was established in 1922 with a synodical-episcopal order, where the church is divided into deaneries, led by a synod and a bishop. In 1928, the church's Constitution was adopted. However, in the 1930s, after a law concerning the Evangelical Lutheran Church was issued, the activities of the democratically elected church institutions were weakened and more power concentrated in the hands of bishops. After the Soviet occupation, the government's clear policy was to persecute and destroy the church. Many clergy, including the archbishop, went abroad into exile. Until 1948, the remaining church leaders attempted to retain the church government independent of the state, refusing to collaborate with the Soviet regime. But due to the repression and manipulation by the state, the church leaders were replaced by persons more obedient to the regime. The new leaders acted as peacemakers, on the one hand cooperating with the Soviet regime, but on the other hand, trying to achieve the most beneficial status possible for the church work. However, all church activities, except services, were forbidden. The leadership of the church was shared by a very limited circle of people. The new church Constitution, adopted in 1948, did not allow the synod to meet. The church underwent considerable decline in the number of parishes and parish members, and soon changed from a nearly national church where majority of the population belonged, to a minority church. Only during the last stage of the occupation period did new movements within the church begin. In 1989 a new Constitution was adopted and new reform

minded church leaders were elected. In 1996, the previous Constitution of 1928 was renewed, and the work of developing a new Constitution, more suited to the new situation, started. This new Constitution adopted in 2007 provides for the division of the church into dioceses, with several bishops and more active participation of the deans in the church leadership.

The relations between church and the state are governed by the clause of the Constitution declaring that the church is separated from the state, which in practice means that there is no state church in Latvia. After the Latvian state concluded its concordat with the Vatican, which had strengthened the position of the Roman Catholic Church, there was now a necessity for adopting special laws concerning other traditional Christian denominations.

The law concerning the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Latvia was adopted in December 2008. The purpose of the law is to regulate relations between the Latvian state and the church, and define the legal status of the church, its activities and spiritual care. It governs the forming of parishes, the conducting of marriages, as well as areas such as church property management and education. The law says that the church should preserve cultural and historical monuments that are at its disposal. The law touches on employment relations, stating that faith and loyalty of the person are of importance when hiring or terminating a person. The law also says that all the legal acts concerning the church have to be aligned with the respective church. The decisions of the church in canonical matters cannot be appealed at the state institutions.



Workshop of Western and Nordic Member Churches in Leeds, United Kingdom, 6-8 October 2008.

Per-Kristian Aschim

The last of four workshops on Church and State in Societies in Transformation focused on the situation in the Lutheran churches in Northern and Western Europe and the planning of the consultation. This report is based on my impressions and records from the workshop. Other participants may weigh the proceedings differently.

In Scandinavia and parts of Germany, there are Lutheran majority churches. Sweden has gone through changes in church-state relations since 2000 and at present. The Church of Sweden is a self-governing body with financial autonomy but it is still governed by separate legislation from other religious bodies.

In Norway a process to loosen ties between church and state is under way. A broad political agreement signed in April 2008 and which will take effect in 2012 has paved the way for changes in the articles concerning religion in the Norwegian constitution. The appointment of bishops and rural deans will be transferred from the government to ecclesiastical bodies. Other details are still being worked out.

The participants from the United Kingdom and France reported on issues from their contexts, including the case of migrant churches in Britain and the relationship between church and state in France in light of laicization.

We identified and discussed a set of issues relevant for the consultation, and the draft of this consultation emerged in outline during the workshop.

The participants from Eastern Europe took part in the discussions, and we shared our different experiences of church-state relations. Some participants were involved in majority churches, while others were part of minority churches.

While they shared some common concerns, the two groups looked at these issues from different angles.

Religious freedom and autonomy from the state

The Swedish and Norwegian churches had experienced a loosening of ties to the state. In Norway the state still has influence over the appointment of bishops, an historical expression of the state's relationship with the majority religion. The development of religious, cultural and ethnic pluralism in society demands new answers and a renegotiation of the relationship between the state and majority churches. In Scandinavia, majority churches have historically had a dominant position as national churches. The new religious and political environment is now challenging this position. The Scandinavian folk churches must learn how to be majority churches while acknowledging that other religious expressions have a proper place in society. Inherited privileges have become a problem. Different contexts are coping with these challenges in various ways. The developments in Sweden, Norway and Finland differ from those in Denmark, where the relationship between church and state is not challenged in the same way.

Nationality and ethnicity

Nationality and ethnicity are not only issues for majority churches. Some minority churches experience living in the shadow of strong national churches of other confessions. Majority churches have to learn how to be part of the one universal church of Christ, where there is no Jew or gentile, no citizen or immigrant. But when we go abroad,

we often bring our church connection as a cultural identification. Many Scandinavians join the seamen's churches or the branch of the church of Norway, Sweden, Denmark or Finland abroad, instead of going to the local Lutheran church. Is Lutheranism a part of national identity as well as an expression of being a Christian? How are these parts of our identity intertwined? Why do we establish immigrant churches instead of participating in the churches already there?

Financing

We also dwelled in our discussion on the different financial systems for churches in Europe. These included everything from self-financing churches to churches financed almost exclusively by the state, and in-between systems that have financial support

from the state for religious education, wages for clergy and the maintenance of church buildings.

Religious education

We also shed some light on the issue of religious education in schools.

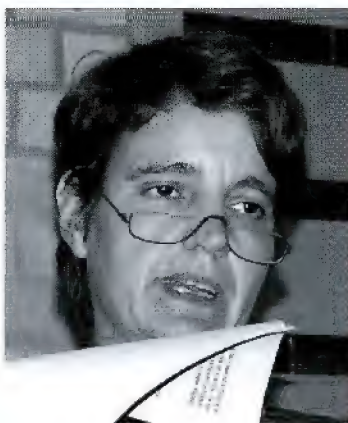
Public religion in European society today

Finally, we discussed the issue of public religion in European society today and agreed to put it on the consultation agenda alongside religion and politics. We also agreed to focus on what Lutheran churches can give to the societies where they are located.

PART II

EAST-WEST INTEGRATION: A CASE STUDY

OUT OF A NICHE ONTO THE MARKET—CHANGES IN THE PROTESTANT CHURCHES IN EAST GERMANY AFTER THE PEACEFUL REVOLUTION



Marianne Subklew

I should like to begin with a quotation from the former President of the Church in the Rhineland, in his book *“Am Morgen der Freiheit das deutsch-deutsche Verhältnis nach der friedlichen Revolution”* (On the morning of freedom—The German-German relationship after the peaceful revolution):

On the morning of freedom we met in the middle of the bridge but could not recognize one another any longer. We said ‘state’ and underestimated the weight which had deformed the term after forty years of separation. We said “church” and only grumblingly admitted that we had been compelled to follow very different paths which had even changed the essence of the forms of the churches.

Where do we come from in the Protestant churches in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR)? We came from being in a minority situation where we were marginalized in society. That meant that we lost members,

Becoming a minority is more than just a statistical problem

Marginalization is a good way to describe our life in a ghetto, forced upon the Protestant church because of the dominant GDR state ideology. Operating on

the fringes of society, the church tried to speak out on the future of society as a whole in order thus to break out of its niche. The key expressions developed to this end within the Federation of Protestant Churches in the GDR were “critical solidarity” or “between adaptation and rejection.”

What did change from 1990 onwards for the Protestant churches in the GDR?

Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Protestant churches in East Germany were required to take far-reaching decisions very quickly. The decisions concerned the introduction of religious education in the schools.

This year the federal state of Berlin held a plebiscite regarding religious education. Voters were asked to decide upon the following proposal: At present the subject Ethics is compulsory for all students from seventh grade onwards. Religious education is an elective that can be chosen on a voluntary basis. The action group Pro Reli that initiated the plebiscite, wanted to establish religious education as an equally valued alternative to Ethics.

The result of the plebiscite reveals significant differences between West and East Berlin. While in West Berlin a clear majority supported the aim of Pro Reli, voters in East Berlin rejected the proposal. Most supporters of Pro Reli lived in the West districts of Spandau, where support reached 69.2 percent, and Steglitz-Zehlendorf, where support hit 66.3 percent.

The East-West District Mitte was divided, with 44.8 percent in favor and 55 percent opposed, while the second East-West District Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg clearly rejected Pro Reli's proposal by a majority of 72.7 percent.

The fewest supporters of Pro Reli voted in Lichtenberg. Only 21.3 percent voted yes. The highest number of voters turned out in Steglitz-Zehlendorf, 40.6 percent of the population cast ballots. In contrast, in Marzahn-Hellersdorf, only 21.6 percent of the population voted. The number of voters in the East was generally lower than in West-Berlin.

Other far-reaching decisions for the churches in East Germany after 1990

They included:

- the adaptation of the church tax system
- the harmonization of the legal system with a wealth of new regulations and laws
- the launching of vast areas of work in the diaconal/social field, often in competition with other welfare organizations
- the setting up of their own military chaplaincy
- the introduction of new advisory/pastoral services for problem areas of society (police, frontiers, etc.)
- the introduction of different structures of administration and accounting.

For all of these areas, the old Federal Republic of Germany had regulations and experience available which had evolved and proved their merit over almost 50 years. It seemed obvious to adopt them. However, they did not take account of the minority situation of the churches in the East. While some people had hoped that, after the political changes, people would again flock to join the churches, this hope was dashed. The minority situation did not change in the new era; it only became much more obvious.

Within a very short period, the East German regional churches had to adapt to the new constraints of state church law and financial policy. In the process, the re-establishment of fellowship between the churches

in the East and the West resulted in "unexpected frictional losses and phenomena of alienation."

While there was "sufficient" agreement on their common theological heritage from the Reformation, the churches had different structures. The only form on offer was the West German "folk church model which had proved its merit for decades." There was no way for the East German churches to establish a specific form of their own.

Even now, the East German regional churches are still involved in a process of far-reaching change. The churches have been hurt by the process of marginalization that made them minority denominations over several decades.

Despite missionary activities and expanding tasks, the number of members has constantly declined. The biblical image of the pilgrim people of God setting out for new shores is often quoted to describe the situation. But it brings with it the temptation of turning the religious problem of becoming a minority into a theological virtue of being a minority church. Becoming a minority is more than a statistical problem.

It can be recognized by:

- the number of people leaving the church
- refusal to pay church taxes
- constant decline in attendance of Christian education and confirmation classes
- decreasing numbers of baptisms, church marriages and funerals

In addition, there is the marginalization of the church.

What is the situation today?

Today we have a situation in which the Protestant church in the Eastern federal states is a minority church with folk church structures.

By becoming part of the social order of the Federal Republic, the compulsory marginalization of the church in East Germany has naturally come to an end. But the minority situation remains.

The social, cultural and ecclesiastical changes since the end of the GDR and the reunification of Germany have not resulted in the growth of any

generalized church practice in East Germany. On the contrary, the normal state of affairs is that most people see themselves as having no religion.

The determinative factor is not so much the loss of members but rather the loss of religious substance

The decisive reason frequently given in both the West and the East for this loss of members are the social conditions in the GDR. However, the erosion process affects both the Eastern and the Western churches—although to varying degrees and intensities.

Secularization as a mass phenomenon has existed since the beginning of the 20th century. It increased considerably under the pressures of National Socialism. The ideological indoctrination by the Socialist Unity Party (SED) over 40 years in the GDR led to further alienation from the church in East Germany.

Originally, secularization was a personal decision related to one's own biography, but in the meantime it has become a habitual attitude taken for granted in families over several generations. So the churches in the East (and also increasingly in the West) are probably facing the end of an era in their work.

For many persons it is true that the church plays no part in people's lives anymore, nor do they miss it. It has become dispensable.

In the Eastern part of Germany, the Christian tradition, including its cultural expressions, has largely disappeared from society. Large portions of the population no longer have any relationship with the church. The span of "non-relationship" ranges from amicable distance to complete rejection.

Naturally, among people in East Germany you also find conceptions of values, a search for meaning in life, religious needs and a yearning for a successful life. In small pockets of the population, there is still an awareness of what the church has to offer, but the church itself plays practically no role for them.

For most, the church as an institution is no longer of any importance. The Christian faith has lost its monopoly standing in society. It has

to stand up to gain its place in the marketplace of meaning as one offering among others.

Expectations from the church in post communist society

Ironically, despite the alienation and disappointment in East Germany, you will find a continuing and perhaps increasing expectation that the church will give ethical guidance to society, and perhaps in an even more resolute way. This hope is often founded on the church's recognized involvement in society as well as on the relatively high respect for the church during the period of the political changes. Even today, people expect the church to be the voice of the silent and weak in society. The trust expressed in these expectations is of great value and must not be gambled away.

The church will have to adapt to these different, sometimes contradictory tendencies. But changes are not only a threat; they are also an opportunity. They can become the occasion for raising anew the question of meaning and identity. They can awaken the desire to live out this faith together with others in a church which is capable of renewal, which is able also to react to the ambivalent experiences of the East Germans and to offer a haven for their buried religious needs.

What faith means for Christians and why the church is important to them has something to do with what they communicate and how attractive they are. The church and its congregations become attractive by means of their message, but not by an attitude of permanent adaptation. Looking with Martin Luther at the "way the people talk" does not mean repeating all they say. A church which was constantly endeavoring to adapt to the demands of the market would probably become a "wishy-washy" church.

The church becomes convincing when it makes clear that it is the mediator but not the maker of its message. Christians are often few in number but they can do a lot when God's Spirit is at work among them. The church is able to make its mark by being open to their fellow human beings but also by standing up for its own causes without opportunism or by using devious tactics. What

might appear to be a dangerous tension is in fact part of the church's identity.

The search for meaning among people without religion

Christians increasingly come across people who keep their distance from the Christian faith, who are indifferent, negative or quite unable to understand. But these people are also looking for guidance for their lives, for meaning, for a holistic life and for community.

We Christians have to be prepared to encounter other life experiences and other designs for life. We have to learn how to establish contact, to try to bridge the gap from the other side. If we take the religious questions and yearnings of other people seriously, they can prepare the way for the gospel to reach them.

Our congregations could open up much more than in the past to people who do not belong to them. In the case of East Germany today, that does not just mean those who have left the church. It means, above all, those who have never belonged to it. As people without a religion, they have probably not missed the church.

As a community of learners, the church must also take account of those "on the fringe" (who keep their distance) and of those "outside" (who have no religion).

Even God makes God's self known beyond the church. The important thing is to discover the opportunities "outside" and the barriers "inside." That demands careful attention, a readiness to learn and an ability to communicate.

What is needed is an open, inviting and attractive church

People need to feel a new attraction to it, find it exciting and interesting so they would like to belong to it. One characteristic of a missionary church is that it wants to win new members.

This is why there is a tremendous need for a new "linguistics of faith," which encourages unforced communication through dialogue and

helps to convey the gospel to the people of our time in a language which they can understand.

That is not just a matter of vocabulary. Making things comprehensible also includes enabling people to experience the relevance of the biblical message to the present so that it can provide orientation and the encouragement to face up to life. Here, the church has a fundamental educational task which is all the more urgent the less it can be taken for granted that people belong to the church.

The same applies to families. They are natural communities for remembering and narrating and, in this sense, are a decisive context for passing on the faith. In order to do so, families need the accompaniment and support of the local church so that they can continue to be places of Christian communication and participation.

Although it is a considerable financial burden, the maintenance of church buildings is a continuing responsibility. Church buildings also represent what the Christian church has meant over the centuries for people's lives, giving them a sense of belonging and roots in a place and in the region. Over a long period, it was inconceivable for people to develop an identity without them. Identity is still linked with the churches today even in a population where the majority have practically no church ties.

Congregations are usually inward looking. This frequently results in a "communication ghetto." In order to change this, it is necessary to look from the outside inwards. We can ask ourselves the following questions:

- What does the congregation look like from outside?
- How do other people perceive it?
- What strikes them about it?

Biographical points of contact, the threshold situations in life, the need for guidance and assurance through rites—these things are more important than theological lessons. Particularly when one considers the large number of people without church ties, it becomes evident that our mission should be to work on relationships.

People may have left the church in droves, but they can only be won as individuals

For this reason, personal encounters are invaluable.

And so a new expression is evolving in the churches of East Germany. Alongside the expressions “folk church” and “minority church,” people now speak of a “participatory church.”

This description is intended to convey that as many people as possible share in and contribute to the work of the church and thus put the Reformation insight of the priesthood of all the baptized into practice. From the 1980s the call to move from a providing church to a participatory church has been heard in the GDR.

Irrespective of whether we are speaking about the East or the West, the future of the Protestant church in Germany will be decided in the local congregations. They are the basis of the church’s work. They continue to be the primary place where the Christian faith is lived out and witnessed to. The local congregation continues to offer enormous opportunities for church socialization. There people can learn and practice the faith where they live; there they can experience participation at decisive stages in their lives; and there the experience of the Christian church can be passed on.

If people are to continue to experience the local church, it will depend even more than in the past on the Christians themselves. It remains the indispensable task of the local church to ensure that, where Christians live and witness, intercession and community are a reality and the worship of God does not become muted.

If a congregation normally keeps the church doors locked and provides next to no information about the next service, it is hard to avoid the impression that nothing important happens there any more, that it never expects any visitors to come and hence certainly does not expect to grow.

The presence of the church locally is not decided by where the pastor resides but by the life of the congregation. This recognition is now spreading under the pressure of circumstances but it also corresponds to a basic Reformation conviction.

Local congregations need to form their own networks and together to identify new points

of crystallization for their religious activities. Regional cooperation makes it possible jointly to carry out tasks which exceed the capacities of an individual congregation (e.g. work with children and young people, adult education, church music, diaconal service, publicity work). If a congregation stops claiming to be the only one responsible and shares responsibility with others, this often makes it possible to exercise responsibility. That, too, is a “participatory church.” It is not restricted to the local church but can also be expressed in regional structures.

This implies that the witness and service is entrusted to the church as a whole and that the various offices in the church do not establish the dominion of some over the others (Barmen IV). Full-time and part-time work takes place side by side in the one ministry to which the whole congregation has been appointed. Full-time workers have to be increasingly mobile and flexible. The resident pastor must be like the travelling apostle and it must be pointed out in this connection that it is possible to learn from ecumenical partners.

New forms of congregations with a different structure of ministries and services

In the longer term, church work as a whole will change markedly. It will be less tied to the local situation and the catchment areas will probably become still wider. This will lead to new forms of congregations with a different structure of ministries and services. In rural areas, as the distances change, so do the priorities. What will then be required is not so much the resident pastor but the travelling apostle. As a qualified pastor, educationalist or parish worker, he or she will travel from one center to another and visit the Christians on the spot.

If the number of full-time staff declines further, the congregations will become still smaller and will be left even more to their own resources. A modern form of apostolic visitation ministry will become all the more important for them. This forecast is not all that exceptional. Although it may not yet seem to be the immediate future

under our circumstances, it has long since been the normal, accepted form of parish work in minority churches in many parts of the world, especially among our neighbors in Eastern and Southern Europe. Some of them can look back on centuries of such experiences. In this respect, as well, the time has come to learn from our ecumenical partners.

The structural changes taking place at present reinforce uncertainties and resignation among those working for the church. They cause an undeniable inner alienation from the church as an institution. Facing up to this development, endeavoring to understand and communicate and trying to do something together to respond to the task entrusted to all is also our common task.

In summary, it can be stated that the East German churches are probably on the threshold of a whole new era in their work. Following decades of declining membership, secularization has become a mass phenomenon. Vast numbers of the population no longer have any relationship to the church. In addition, social institutions are also suffering from a loss of confidence of which the churches have to bear the consequences as well.

However, despite the alienation and disappointment, in East Germany there are also considerable expectations that the church will make a significant contribution to overcoming the many conflicts in society.

The drastic economy measures in the churches are in many ways an obstacle to such expectations. But they are inevitable in view of the decline in membership and a considerable drop in income. And far-reaching structural changes in church work are equally unavoidable.

The prerequisite for the church's ministry is the certainty that the living Lord will never cease to gather his church. It is sent into the world to witness to Jesus Christ. Therefore the church is a witnessing community. Its task is to serve people both with the word and in deed. In this sense, it is a serving community. With all the diversity of preaching and diaconal ministries, the church is a community of communication in which everyone depends on everyone else. But the solid foundation of this community is its common life of worship and prayer.

The church exists so that people can believe

The church without mission is inconceivable. The church must keep the question of God alive. In their encounters with those who keep their distance or who have no religion, Christians are faced with other experiences of life and other designs for living. By respecting these and being open to their questions and yearnings, they can prepare the way for the gospel. Mission in East Germany is predominantly a work of relationships. For this purpose, personal encounters are essential.

This requires an open, inviting and attractive church. This openness is also necessary for Christians as is demonstrated by the difficulties they have when they are called upon to explain what they believe. In order to move out of the communication ghetto and the church's self-centeredness, we need a change of perspective which can open the eyes of the local church to see how it is perceived from the outside.

The church's work should be designed, above all, to make it a "participatory church." Then the church will be recognized increasingly by the fact that its work is done by its members. Participation is an event in which many people share.

The congregations form the basis for the work of the church. The presence of the church locally will be decided in the future, however, less by where the pastor resides than by the existence of the congregation. The basic framework for lively church work will need to be provided increasingly by the congregations themselves. But, since because of their declining membership they will often no longer be able to fulfill the minimum requirements for autonomous church provision, regional cooperation will be essential. Tasks can be carried out jointly when they are beyond the resources of an individual congregation. That is why a "participatory church" is important.

Full-time and part-time work in the church are of equal value. From the very beginning, voluntary, unpaid activity has been the basis of the church's work. In this sense, too, what matters is a "participatory church."

In order to implement this, some rethinking is required

Because of economy measures and a reduction in appointments, the extent of the work has now expanded beyond anything that paid or voluntary workers can manage. Since concentration has become unavoidable, the priorities and structures for the work have to be redefined.

It will increasingly be impossible for the work to be limited to a locality. Probably the catchment areas will become even larger. That implies new forms of congregations and different structures for ministries, offices and agencies. A high degree of flexibility and mobility will be demanded of full-time church workers. A modern form of the apostolic visitation ministry has long since become the usual form of work in many churches worldwide, including Europe. In this connection, ecumenical experience is worth examining.

In view of the developments in East Germany, many people consider regional churches to be a dying species, not only because of the similarity between their structures and those of the state but also because of the growing autonomy of the congregations. It is not longer sufficient for regional churches to define themselves in reference to their territory and their history, by their confessional allegiance or their legal autonomy. But, within a network of congregations, regions and the church as a whole, they will continue to be needed and have tasks of their own to carry out.

To conclude

I come originally from a church in the East, the Pomeranian Evangelical Church. Now I am living in the context of a "Western" church in Hamburg.

These churches will be merging with the Church of Mecklenburg to form one large Protestant church in the North along the Baltic Sea coast.

I am looking forward to this exciting enterprise in which unification will perhaps take place in a different way from the union between the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and the East German churches in 1990.

As the merger processes continue, we shall repeatedly be asking ourselves where we come from with our different images of the church. And, above all, we will be asking, where do we want to go?

Our diversity is a gift; the worlds in which we witness differ. Parish work in a secularized village in West Pomerania is naturally quite different from parish work in a region where people have continued to be open to religion. In a city center church in Hamburg people must be addressed differently from those in a suburban parish of Schwerin. The different contexts in which people live will require quite different ways of working because the gospel wishes to reach the people; it is "the message of the free grace of God" which the church has to deliver "to all people" according to Thesis VI of the Barmen Declaration.

The charisma of concentrating on the essentials in faith and mission and the charisma of communicating the gospel through culture continue to be core tasks for a church which is following Jesus Christ in the 21st century.

Finally, since the beginning of the new millennium, a number of things have begun to move. It has become evident that the Protestant churches in Europe must cooperate with one another much more closely if they wish to make a mark on the political and social level in a Europe which is becoming increasingly close knit. In political Europe—to give just one example—one needs a common address and a coordinated strategy; nobody can expect the politicians in Strasbourg and Brussels to consult each of the more than 100 Protestant churches in Europe individually when issues arise that concern the churches. Here, our efforts need to be coordinated and combined in a way which enables Europeans to perceive and recognize the Reformation churches. Individual churches in regions of Germany will scarcely be able to do anything, although the decisions taken in Brussels and Strasbourg will certainly have consequences for them and their work. Whether the Protestant voice in Europe is heard will essentially depend on whether the voice of the gospel can be heard in Europe.

That is our task: to move out of a niche and into the market.

PART III

THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT IN TRANSFORMATION

NEW FORMS OF PLURALISM AS CHALLENGING AND TRANSFORMATIVE FACTORS

Gerhard Robbers

Religion matters again. Of course, religion has always mattered throughout history. Yet, many have said that secularization of society will grow. Religion, it was predicted, will be overcome. For a long time—at least in Europe—, religion did not figure in the formation of public opinion, and was forgotten in the media. But religion is on the rise again.

Once more, religion matters

Freedom of religion: Is this an outdated notion? Hasn't secular society overcome all religion? Isn't Europe completely secular? And should it not perhaps be so? On the contrary, we are seeing a renaissance of religion. People are looking for belief again. And people believe again.

Religion is growing again, though its fruits are sometimes frightening. For example, new religious wars are being waged, and that should not be happening.

Religion cannot be suppressed. All attempts to do so have failed. All attempts to reduce religion to one of many societal factors have failed. Attempts to make religion a purely personal matter have also been unsuccessful. Religion forms public identity. It is part of public life everywhere in Europe, and throughout the world, because it is a structure basic to human existence. He who forgets religion forfeits life.

There is a rising pluralism in religion. New religions are emerging, and foremost: Islam has become strong in Europe. Pluralism is a challenge, but it is also an opportunity.

Religious pluralism has been acknowledged by the European Court of Human Rights. The Court has constantly reaffirmed the right enshrined in Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights guaranteeing freedom of thought, conscience and religion as one of the foundations of a “democratic society.” This is vital, not only for believers and their conception of life, but it is also a precious asset for atheists, agnostics, skeptics and the unconcerned. Pluralism cannot be separated from a democratic society. It is a cherished principle that has been fought for over the centuries.¹

The Court has also said that in a democratic society, in which several religions coexist, it may be necessary to place restrictions on this freedom in order to reconcile the interests of the various groups and ensure that everyone's beliefs are respected.² However, in exercising its regulatory power in this sphere and in its relations with the various religions, denominations and beliefs, the State has a duty to remain neutral and impartial.³



¹ Cf. Metropolitan Church of Bessarabia and Others v. Moldova, Council of Europe, *Human Rights Files No. 20* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2005).

² Cf. Kokkinakis v. Greece, Judgment of 25 May 1993, Series A, No. 260-A, p. 17, §31, and Buscarini and Others v. San Marino [GC], No. 24645/94, §34, ECHR 1999-I.

³ Cf. Hasan and Chaush v. Bulgaria, Judgment of 26 October 2000, §78.

What is at stake here is the preservation of pluralism and the proper functioning of democracy, one of the principal characteristics of which is the possibility it offers of resolving a country's problems through dialogue, without recourse to violence, even when they are irksome.⁴ Accordingly, the role of the authorities in such circumstances is not to remove the cause of tension by eliminating pluralism, but to ensure that the competing groups tolerate each other.⁵

The Court further observes that in principle the right to freedom of religion excludes assessment by the State of the legitimacy of religious beliefs or the ways in which those beliefs are expressed. State measures favoring a particular leader or specific organs of a divided religious community or seeking to compel the community or part of it to place itself, against its will, under a single leadership, would also constitute an infringement of the freedom of religion. In democratic societies the State does not need to take measures to ensure that religious communities remain or are brought under a unified leadership.⁶

Moreover, since religious communities traditionally exist in the form of organized structures, Article 9 must be interpreted in the light of Article 11, which safeguards associative life against unjustified State interference. Seen in that perspective, the right of believers to freedom of religion, which includes the right to manifest one's religion in community with others, encompasses the expectation that believers will be allowed to associate freely, without arbitrary State intervention. Indeed, the autonomous existence of religious communities is indispensable for pluralism in a democratic society and is thus an issue at the very heart of the protection which Article 9 affords.⁷

Pluralism is at the basis of anti-discrimination law. Legislation against discrimination is becoming stronger. Discrimination means treat-

ing someone unfairly because they belong to a particular group of people.

Many countries have passed national provisions against discrimination. Germany has done so recently. The United States passed such laws a long time ago, and Australia, the United Kingdom and Bulgaria have a long history of anti-discrimination legislation. These laws clearly prohibit discrimination on religious grounds.

The European Union has passed regulations,⁸ codes of conduct⁹ and directives¹⁰ combating discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, disability or sexual orientation, race, nationality, gender, age and political opinions. The United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966 obligates all states to ensure that all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction are afforded the rights recognized in the covenant, without distinction of any kind, regardless of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.¹¹

Equal treatment is one of the oldest and one of the most precious human rights. Antidiscrimination law is one of its modern offspring.

In all this I see two major developments, two challenges: Non-discrimination of religions and non-discrimination by religions.

II Non-discrimination of religions

We see fundamental differences in interpretation of non-discrimination, of equal treatment. Some say that equal treatment means all must be treated identically. All religions, big or small, old or new should be treated exactly alike. This is an approach often heard from the U.S. It may well be linked to the experi-

⁴ Cf. *United Communist Party of Turkey and Others v. Turkey*; Judgment of 30 January 1998, Reports 1998-I, Reports 1998-I, p. 27, § 57.

⁵ Cf. *Serif v. Greece*, No. 38178/97, §53, ECHR 1999-IX.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Hasan and Chaush v. Bulgaria*, f.n. 3.

⁸ Rg. (EC) No 1927/2006 — 20.12.2006 — Global Adjustment Fund; et al.

⁹ European Central Bank

¹⁰ C.D. 2000/78/EC — 27.11.2000

¹¹ ICCPR article 2(1).

ence and the needs of building a nation from scratch, integrating all different peoples and groups.

In one European Parliament I have heard the demand for affirmative action for religious communities. All smaller religious communities should receive more money, more support, and greater exposure in the public media until they have become as strong as the traditional, bigger, religious communities in the country — to make them all equal. This demand did not succeed and it would certainly violate freedom of religion and the very idea of truth.

This is the marketplace approach to religious liberty. Religion appears as a good to sell. The predominant question is how to convince as many people as possible of one's own truths. It is basically a proselytizing notion of religious freedom, drawn from the idea of competition. It is clear that the traditional, older, well situated, socially predominant religions in a region may well experience this market philosophy as a threat. This is especially the case when the new religion can spend a lot of money, when it can promise not only truth and tradition, but economic prosperity, a better standard of living and world travel.

In this marketplace equal treatment is critical. Any differences in the treatment of religious groups will lead to a situation where the primary interest becomes spreading one's faith, of proselytizing, to gain more influence and a larger position in the religious market. From this point of view any differences in terms of size or social standing, any reasoning drawn from the historical impact of certain religious denominations are from the very outset suspect. This is an approach that requires the State to adopt a hands-off approach to religion.

The situation becomes more complicated when religious freedom is understood as positive, when it is attributed a public standing, or when it is given room by public authorities to flourish. As soon as religion is given a public role it is necessary to distinguish between religions and to ask questions.

When churches sit on boards of youth protection agencies, when they supervise public broadcasting stations, when they advise law makers, when there is religious education in public schools, when there is a military chaplaincy, when there

is public funding of religious activities, not every religious group can be included. To incorporate all of these would make the system unworkable.

The smaller religious groups, the newcomers, will tend to understand a system like this as being discriminatory and thus contrary to religious freedom.

However, the full participation they seek would deprive religion from the access to public institutions and would bring a setback in terms of religious freedom.

The correct claim would be for equal rights, not identical rights. Offering identical rights means losing sight of the social role of a religion, its historical impact and cultural background. A system of identical rights would mean in practice that very many features of religious freedom could not be granted. For example, the right of all religions to sit on youth protection boards would mean that in fact no religious group could be on the board. The only way to achieve this kind of representation would be if a government dictated that all religions establish a national board to nominate common delegates. It would be equal ecumenical cohabitation by government authority.

A system of equal rights makes it possible for an adequate attribution of positions. Equality does not mean identity. Equality means adequacy. Equality means offering appropriate rights and positions. From the perspective of equality differences are possible as long as they are legitimate. Differences have to be based on legitimate reasons. And they can be.

In Germany, representatives of the Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish constituencies, together with certain civic groups, hold seats on advisory boards and committees that relate to ethical issues. These include youth protection agencies or organizations that censor or classify pornographic literature, as well as public broadcasting institutions. Their purpose is to interpose a layer of public civil society between private individuals and the state. Today, about 200, 000 Jews live in Germany, a comparatively small number due to the Nazi murder of the Jewish people. The Jewish faith communities thus are not so much represented numerically, but in terms of culture and history. To offer them participation in the public sphere is a moral duty in Germany today. The Jewish people are a part of Germany's

culture. In a very important way the Jewish people are part of Germany's identity, of Germany's very conscience. These are aspects of equality unique to Germany. It is a highly important aspect of our religious equality.

One of the major challenges when creating laws against religious discrimination is:

Giving an adequate legal status to Islam and Muslims in western societies

How can we best meet this challenge? We in Europe have to learn again how much Islam and Christendom have in common, how much Muslim and Christian cultures share. Europe has Aristotle via Arabia. Thomas of Aquinas would not be who he is for Christians without Averroes, the Muslim Ibn Rushd. And Avicenna, the Muslim Ibn Sinna, is at the very foundation of the controversy over universality. Being a basic structure of occidental philosophy, it still matters in any contemporary textbook on constitutional law today. Avicenna for centuries was one of the most important medical authorities in Western Europe. His text book on medical treatment was used as a foremost point of reference for medical doctors until the 18th century. Or, turning to mathematics, we still count in Arabic digits. These have come from India via Muslim countries and cultures to the West, just as has the zero we use to calculate. Until the 13th century Western mathematics did not have the zero. It came from Muslim mathematicians.

Today's computers would not be possible without the one and the zero. In economics, the check is a central instrument of monetary traffic. The check came from Muslim Persia into modern Europe. It has kept its Persian language name until today. In addition, many key features of the laws of international diplomacy have origins in Muslim legal culture. Religious tolerance comes from Muslim teaching. This has led to further development of tolerance. Many in Western Europe have forgotten about what their culture owes to Muslim thought.

Some Muslims have also forgotten about it. They may need to be reminded of their own tradi-

tions. It should and it can be a renewed source of peaceful coexistence of cultures. The challenge is also up to Islam. Islam also has to open up, develop. Islam has to find a place in societies identified with Christianity; and Islam must do so respecting those Christian traditions.

The basic idea of equality in a pluralistic society is the idea of respect. Equality means respecting the other to be someone like oneself, at least in one aspect. Equality is in its core a religious idea. As such it has come into law. All are created by God as human beings. Jesus said of himself, that he is the way, the truth, and the life. We come to know that by grace. But to kill people because they do not share the same belief — as some, but only some, Muslims do — is to deny God's creation. What a blasphemy it is to kill people who believe otherwise. It is treason against creation. It is treason against God.

Bring the truth to them, instead. Try to convince them. Mission is not so much to make proselytes. To do missionary work is showing the truth, giving an example, helping people to believe. The Christian culture is a strong culture. And the truth will stand.

To move towards non-discrimination we must understand the other. Martin Luther wrote an introduction into the German translation of the Koran, published in 1547. Luther said: read the Koran to better understand Islam, to better understand Muslims, and read the Koran to better understand yourself. That introduction into the Koran was an early act of enlightenment.

III The other challenge: non-discrimination by religions

There is a growing tendency in human rights discourse to say that religions should treat people equally. Some argue that Islam discriminates against women. Some religions do not ordain women priests. Some religions stand against homosexuals. Do religions have to employ people, regardless of their religion or sexual orientation or their moral beliefs and behavior? What do you do about the remarried nurse in the kindergarten,

the gay director of a boy's school that is run by a religion?

Religion is about truth and good behavior. Freedom of religion is about the ability to give an example to the world. Freedom of religion is about having the license to be different. Often times, equality seems to run contrary to freedom. If we require religions to act exactly the same as democratic secular law requires, we move very near to giving supremacy to secular power, and we lose religious freedom.

There are no easy answers to give when different rights collide. There are no quick responses on how to match colliding interests. Both have to be respected. Interests have to be balanced. Solutions must take the setting into account, respect traditions, honor people's convictions. And often people have to change their minds.

Recently, anti-discrimination law has found respectable solutions. The European Union directive on non-discrimination regarding employment is in line with the common constitutional traditions of its member states.

Member states' laws may allow different treatment based on a person's religion in occupational activities within organizations of a particular religious ethos if that person's religion or belief constitutes a genuine, legitimate and justified occupational requirement. Churches may well require their staff to act with loyalty to the religious teaching of the church. This is the right path to follow — to respect church autonomy in defining its own ethos. The chief medical doctor in a Roman Catholic hospital should not publicly advocate abortion. Roman Catholic hospitals

should not be obligated to perform abortions, a question being debated in the Slovak Republic.

These are the two challenges in pluralism: non-discrimination of religions and non-discrimination by religions.

IV

All depends on a third challenge. All depends on the people

Laws do not exist in isolation from the people. Religion matters again. It matters for people. Religion can lead to the best of humanity. And religion can be misused for the worst, such as war. Religion matters again. All depends on getting to the minds of the people. All depends on people respecting each other. All depends on people seeing the other as someone equal.

The law cannot enforce that. Education can; speaking with each other can; the media can. There is a mission to complete. Missionary activity is all about getting to the minds of the people, to convince them of what is right and what is wrong. And we have to start with ourselves — or rather, I have to start with myself. Goodness is not natural to one person and evil natural to another. Good and the evil are not attributed by people or cultures or nations, nor even are they attributed by religions. Good and the evil run straight through each person, through each nation and through each culture. Good and the evil, those two empires, run straight through each one of us. Respecting one another for the good in everyone is the key for all future developments in pluralism.

STAND UP FOR JUSTICE! SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PROTESTANT CHURCHES IN EUROPE



Dieter Heidtmann

The international economic system as a question of faith

The Confession of the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in Accra, Ghana, in 2004 was the starting point:

We believe that the integrity of our faith is at stake if we remain silent or refuse to act in the face of the current system of neoliberal economic globalization and therefore we confess before God and one another ... Therefore, we reject the current world economic order imposed by global neoliberal capitalism and any other economic system, including absolute planned economies, which defy God's covenant by excluding the poor, the vulnerable and the whole of creation from the fullness of life ... We reject any claim of economic, political and military empire which subverts God's sovereignty over life and acts contrary to God's just rule.¹

This "confession of faith" gave rise to a lively debate within the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE): Can an ethical, economic question be the subject of a confession? What consequences does this have for the churches, which make the relation to a certain economic system a question of belief or non-belief? And what does this mean for the development of the church community within CPCE and the relations of the churches among themselves?

The Leuenberger Agreement, the theological foundation document of the CPCE, encourages the churches to "responsible service in the world." It states, "They stand up for temporal justice and peace between individuals and nations. To do this they have to join with

others in seeking rational and appropriate criteria and play their part in applying these criteria. They do so in the confidence that God sustains the world and as those who are accountable to him."² In this sense the General Assembly of CPCE in September 2006 in Budapest mandated the CPCE Council to clarify in a learning dialogue concerning "Protestant churches facing the new challenges of social justice, the specifically Protestant conditions and criteria of ethical judgment formation."³ On behalf of the council a group of young representatives from CPCE member churches compiled the doctrinal study "Stand up for justice," which was accepted by the CPCE Council in January 2009 and will be considered by CPCE member churches in autumn 2009.

In the study process the group analyzed approximately 80 statements of Protestant churches in Europe on social and economic questions. The result is a memorandum of the Protestant churches in Europe on the question of confession formation on social issues.

Who speaks for whom?

The analysis of the statements of Protestant churches on economic and social questions reveals first of all a wide variety of processes in the ethical discernment among Protestant churches. No one "magisterium" determines the ethical teaching of the churches, but this is done by different committees at various different church levels. In many cases a democratic

¹ Accra Konfession. Bericht der Sektion Bundesschluss. Bund für wirtschaftliche und ökologische Gerechtigkeit. http://warc.jalb.de/warcajsp/side.jsp?news_id=1174&&navi=46.

² Leuenberger Konkordie Art. 11. Im Auftrag des Exekutiv Ausschusses für die Leuenberger Lehrgespräche hg. v. W. Hütffmeier. Frankfurt/M.: Lembeck 1993.

³ Freiheit verbindet. Schlussbericht der 6. Vollversammlung der GEKE. In: Gemeinschaft gestalten – Evangelisches Profil in Europa. Texte der 6. Vollversammlung der Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa – Leuenberger Kirchengemeinschaft – in Budapest, 12. bis 18. September 2006. Frankfurt/M.: Lembeck 2007. 308.

decision-making process “from the bottom up” is observed. The church governing bodies take up the impetus from the churches and carry it on. It is remarkable that within the Protestant churches the confessional differences do not develop a distinctive effect in the statements. In the 1980s the different ethical traditions of the Lutheran two-realm teaching and the Reformed kingdom of Christ teachings were still the subject of dialogue within CPCE. Today it must be said the corporate and social context shapes the respective statements, sometimes making them stronger than the original confessional stance.

The statements aim to offer the individual Christians as well as the respective church community the criteria for ethical deliberation. If one compares the statements from the churches in nearly all European countries, large areas of similarity appear. Human dignity, justice and a paradigmatic allocation of freedom and responsibility shape ethical principles in the public statements of the Protestant churches in Europe.

Recommendations to the churches

The CPCE memorandum is, however, not limited to the evaluation of the statements. From the analysis of the Protestant positions, the study group has developed seven recommendations for the CPCE member churches for future statements on social questions, in accordance with the biblical admonition: “Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear” (Eph 4:29).

Stand up for justice

Economic globalization, poverty and social exclusion, education, migration, integration and ecological injustice challenge the churches. They strike the churches at the core of their life and mission. Standing up for justice, peace and the preservation of God’s creation is an essential part of being the church. Therefore, churches are not only mandated to take a position as an expression of Christian faith, but they have a responsibility to do so in their respective contexts.

Help the people to make their decisions

It is one task of the Protestant churches’ statements to assist individuals in their decision making, a concept deeply rooted in the Protestant principle of the priesthood of all believers. The various church bodies aim in their social discernment to help individual church members in determining their positions and in taking decisions in everyday life situations. At the same time decision-making should not be individualized. In Protestant understanding individual freedom is always linked with responsibility and love for others. It is therefore the task of the churches to support people in coming to common decision-making and communal responsibility. The decisive criterion for decision-making is the benefit of the neighbor, to serve the common good and for peace (1 Cor 10.23ff).

Protestant decision-making processes link democratic decision-making and responsible leadership. They involve people, enlarge the commitment of church members to the positions of their churches and are thus meant to contribute to the building up of a community.

Don’t be afraid to give complex answers to complex issues

We recognize that complex ethical issues require complex answers. Protestant traditions highlight careful observation, thoughtfulness and cautious application of the Word of God to the situation. Such an approach rejects fundamentalism and simplistic answers on the one hand; on the other hand it excludes ethical permissiveness. Churches in Europe are part of a pluralistic society and they have no special privileges. Therefore they should remain humble when it comes to some fields of expertise; however they rightly feel bound to contribute to the ongoing debates from their specific starting point, which is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Take a clear stand

Differentiation is not to be seen as being in opposition to taking a clear stand. Competent analysis of the situation is the first step; accurate and assiduous judgment

in the light of the gospel and one's own theological tradition is the second. The third is to take a clear stand. This calls for advocacy, for strengthening the voice of the marginalized, and pointing out weaknesses in our societies. It also calls for living together in solidarity with the vulnerable, the excluded, and the marginalized. It also demands integration of the strong and powerful in society into communities.

Speak with a common voice

The churches have a common ground in the gospel. If the churches take the common ground and their fellowship seriously they can only cooperate as closely as possible. On a pragmatic level, the churches have a better chance of being heard by political institutions and in political debate if they prove able to arrive at joint positions on the basis of their common faith.

Moreover, in a broader ecumenical context, the churches in Europe committed themselves in the Charta Oecumenica "to work towards the visible unity of the Church of Jesus Christ in the one faith, expressed in the mutual recognition of baptism and in Eucharistic fellowship, as well as in common witness and service."

Build up: strengthen the community

"Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor" (Rom 15:2). Carrying forward this biblical thought, churches will engage in cooperation with people and institutions outside the circles of churches. Opening up to all stakeholders' argumentation and language and thus reassessing their own established principles and language, churches will learn about the crucial concerns of society. This dialogue equips the churches with means to communicate their message more clearly and to make their suggestions and directions for action more plausible.

Witness in service

As the CPCE we recognize that we are called to witness to the world in word and deed. Words

become alive where they are put into practice. The close link between word and action makes the witness of Jesus Christ and his transforming power visible. Therefore every statement and voice raised by the churches needs to be backed up by action.

The responsibility of the churches

At first reading, these recommendations to the CPCE member churches sound unspectacular. Much appears simply natural to Protestant churches. But that is far from the case. The statement formulates the requirement that the Protestant churches in Europe should speak together, but also in the wider ecumenical movement, with a common voice as far as possible. It expects the churches to carry out advocacy work for those who do not have a voice in society: the poor, the minorities and the excluded. If the Protestant churches in Europe adopt these recommendations they would have an important social and political impact. Emphasizing the close relationship between word and action would bring new relevance to the diaconal work of many churches, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. Opening up to other groups in European society requires a new language that is "religiously unmusical."

Finally, the statement gives a clear answer to the question of whether ethical issues can become points of confession. "Literally, *status confessionis* means a situation of confessing, a situation in which the confession of Jesus Christ is at stake ... Historically, the question whether there can be a *status confessionis* in ethical issues has provoked different answers from Protestant denominations. This difference goes back to the time of the Reformation ... With reference to the experiences from the conflicts of the churches with the totalitarian regimes of national socialism and communism the doctrinal study group determines: 'However, all Protestant churches concede that there might be situations in which the being of a church as church is at stake and when it is, consequently, not enough for the churches to raise their prophetic voice and to care for those who are in need but to throw themselves under the wheel in order to stop it.'"⁴

⁴ D. Bonhoeffer, *The Church and the Jewish Question*, 225.

PART IV

STRENGTH OF THE CHURCH AS AN ACTOR IN CIVIL SOCIETY

PRIVATIZED VERSUS PUBLIC RELIGION, AND CIVIL SOCIETY— A BRITISH PERSPECTIVE

Roy Long

I have been asked to talk about our topic from a British perspective, and I begin with a simple warning: I am a Lutheran pastor and an educator; I am not a full-time theologian and I am not an academic; *and* I am British. For these reasons my style and approach might not be what you are used to. You will have to forgive me for that. I have another warning: expect questions, but not answers.

I want to find out who I am, where I come from, and what I do.

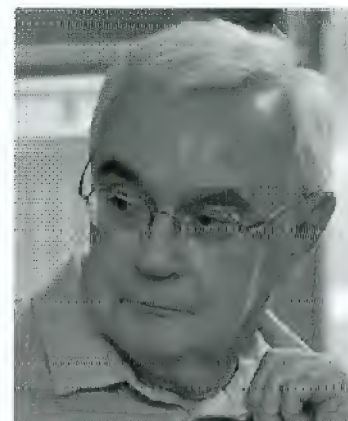
Because I live in a country where there are no such things as identity cards, the first place for me to go is my passport. Nowadays, that means a small booklet with a soft red cover. By looking at that, I can discover who I am and where I come from. I learn that my name is Roy Long and that I was born on 13 July 1942 in Nottingham, and that I am a citizen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The United Kingdom is part of the European Community. My passport does not tell me what I do. Years ago, I had an old-fashioned, stiff, blue passport, which did provide me with that information, but my new-style passport must have some good reason for not telling me.

Let us look a little more closely at the information in my passport. Where do I come from?

What is this place that calls itself “The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland”?

At first sight the answer seems simple: The United Kingdom consists of four different-sized countries united together in a parliamentary democracy with a hereditary monarchy which can trace its family history back to the 8th century. The four countries (always listed in order of size) are England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Together, they occupy around 80 percent of an archipelago which is situated off the north-western coast of mainland Europe. Its southernmost tip is on the same latitude as Brittany, in France, and its northernmost tip is on the same latitude as Bergen, in Norway, a distance of around 1000 miles. This means that there are significant differences in the ethnic make-up of its indigenous peoples. The remaining 20 percent of the archipelago is occupied by the Republic of Ireland (Éire/Poblacht na-Éireann), which has been a sovereign independent republic since 1949. The whole lot is often referred to as “The British Isles”, but that is a bit unfair to the citizens of the Irish Republic, and, in today’s terms, politically incorrect. Great Britain is notorious for its preoccupation with the weather—of which there is a lot—and its insularity: “Fog in Channel, continent cut off”!

I was born in Nottingham. That means that I am an Englishman: not a Scot, not Welsh, not Northern Irish. I happen to know some other things that my passport does not tell me: my father’s family is as English as it



is possible to be, from the industrial heartland of the East Midlands, but my mother's family is a mixture of North Country English and 19th century immigrants from Fryslân (Friesland), in the Netherlands.

Being English makes me different from a Scotsman, who speaks a language as different from mine as *Bokmål* is different from *Nynorsk* in Norway; it makes me different from a Welshman, who might speak a Welsh-accented form of English, or *Cymraeg*, which is a Celtic language. I am not an Ulsterman from Northern Ireland, who might speak "Ulster Scots" or *Gaeilge*. I am an Englishman who speaks standard, "Queen's" English, most of the time, but who can happily lapse into a North Country dialect if necessary.

These four countries have been united in their present form since 1922, although various forms of union have existed since the 16th century, when Wales was joined to England. Now, the union seems as though it might be breaking up: there is still a United Kingdom parliament in Westminster, but since 1999 there has been a Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh, a Welsh *Senedd* in Cardiff, and a Northern Irish Assembly in Belfast. Note, please, that the poor old English do not have a parliament of their own! Things in the United Kingdom are changing all the time. Maybe, in 10 years time, my passport will say "England" and I shall need to show it at the frontier when I drive up to Edinburgh; who knows?

Religious and cultural plurality

There are significant linguistic, social and cultural differences, but one of the main things which make these four different countries different is their religion. Of course, they are now very pluralist societies, so I have to beware of generalizations. England has a church which is "by law established". It is called "The Church of England" and its parishes, both in towns and in villages, cover the whole of England. It has bishops (two of them archbishops), and several of these sit in the Upper Chamber of the Houses of Parliament (the House of Lords) and so take part in the process of law-making for the whole United Kingdom. England also has lots of "Nonconformist" or "Free" churches, such as the Baptists, the Methodists, the Moravians, and the Reformed, and very fast growing free evangelical, charismatic, and "Black" churches. Scotland has

a "national" church, the Church of Scotland, which is Reformed and where bishops are still regarded with horror. Its parishes cover the whole of Scotland, but it also has a wide range of other church groups. Wales has no established church and is roughly equally divided between "church" (Anglican, but definitely not the Church of England), and "chapel" (like the English Nonconformists). I *could* talk about the religious situation in Northern Ireland, but we would need at least a week, and we would still probably not understand it! There are Roman Catholics throughout the United Kingdom: some very liberal and forward-thinking, some very conservative and reactionary. After centuries of religious rivalry and strife, religious peace has broken out in most parts of the four countries, and ecumenical co-operation is strong. This does not mean, however, that there is never any hostility between the different Christian bodies—or, within them!

All of which could be a good description of what the religious situation was like in 1942, the year of my birth. I was born into a country which was culturally Christian, though with a small, but very diverse, Jewish community. In 2009, as I approach my 67th birthday, it is only part of the truth. Today, as a result of more than 50 years of immigration, there are more Muslims than Methodists in Great Britain, more Hindus than United Reformed in England. Alongside the churches, chapels, cathedrals and meeting houses, you will find mosques, mandirs and gurdwaras, and in some very distinct areas, such as North London, Manchester, or Gateshead, you will also find dozens of synagogues. No longer do we simply have the seven or eight indigenous languages of the British Isles: it is estimated that over 300 languages are spoken in London alone. I live in a tiny village of 500 people, but in our nearest town, six miles away, I am just as likely to hear Polish, Somali or Bengali on the streets, as I am to hear English. In the 67 years of my life, the nation that I live in has changed beyond recognition. It is now a "multi-nation": multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-faith. My friends and colleagues include Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, and there is no doubt that living in such a mixed society raises all sorts of questions, from how to define what is "politically correct", to "how should Christians be faithful to their Lord in witnessing to non-Christians?"

Churches in a process of transition

Today, the churches in Great Britain and Ireland are in a process of transition, often reluctantly. The “traditional” churches try to cling to the outward trappings of authority, but church attendances gets lower by the year and the voice of the church is seldom heeded. “Do not vote for the British National Party” said the Archbishops of Canterbury and York before the recent local and European elections. For the first time ever, two British National Party candidates were elected to the European Parliament. Increasingly, the churches seem to be so inwardly focused—so *private*, so *self-absorbed*, that they seem to be irrelevant to the everyday world that people live in. Mind you, the same seems to be increasingly true of political parties as well.

Yet, surprisingly, at the same time, there is evidence to the contrary. In England, around 50 percent of state-funded education is provided by the churches (mainly the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church), and there are long lists of people wanting to get into their schools. This is not necessarily because parents want a *distinctively Christian* education, but because such schools are perceived to have a better ethos and a better discipline. The “free evangelical churches”—often charismatic in their theology—are growing, and they have spearheaded a move to develop independent Christian schools, of which there are now over 100.

What I do

My passport does not tell me is what I do. It does not tell me that for nearly 40 years I have tried to combine being a Christian minister with being involved in the world of education. It does not tell me that I was ordained as a Lutheran pastor on Reformation Day 1970, and that I subsequently served in three parishes, an English-speaking parish with 20 nationalities among its members, a German-speaking parish with regular English services, and a Tigrinya-speaking congregation with members from Eritrea and Ethiopia. It does not tell me that I was a Head of Religious Studies in two secondary schools, or that I ended my educational career as one of Her Majesty’s Inspectors of Schools, with a special responsibility to advise the Office for Standards in Education on all matters relating to Jewish and Evangelical Christian

independent schools. It does not tell me that for 40 years I have had to perform the impossible task of juggling together different vocations, different languages, different cultures, and different approaches to faith. And it does not tell you I had to do it while struggling to remain faithful to my Lutheran heritage.

This brings me to the Lutheran churches, and to their role in this very diverse society that is 21st century Great Britain.

Estimates of how many Lutherans there are in the United Kingdom vary, depending on whether you are an optimist or a pessimist: is it 20,000 or 100,000? Quite simply, we do not know. And how do you define “Lutheran”—by conviction, or by heritage? We do not know the answer to that either. What we do know is that the Lutheran picture in Great Britain and Ireland is more complex than anywhere else in Europe. In the United Kingdom, Lutherans use (or have used) 19 different languages in their worship and belong to 11 different church bodies, nine of which act together in the Lutheran Council of Great Britain. Seven of the language groups - Amharic, Chinese (in two varieties), English, Oromo, Polish, Swahili and Tigrinya - are more closely united in the Lutheran Church in Great Britain, which was established in 1961, has been a member of the Lutheran World Federation since 1988, and has had its own bishop since the year 2000. It now has 14 pastors, one deacon, and 15 lay ministers, but it remains a minority within the Lutheran family in Great Britain.

It is a church which faces a seemingly impossible task

Firstly, we have to minister to our congregations, and not only are these far apart from each other, but the people in any given congregation may be widely scattered as well. It is a real *diaspora* church, which, like Great Britain, is multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-lingual. Its “multi” nature also means that there are many different understandings of what it means to be Lutheran.

Secondly, together with the other churches in the Lutheran Council, we have to be a channel that represents world Lutheranism to a nation which, even now, knows little about it. “Oh, you are a Lutheran?”, or “What’s that? Something to do with Martin Lu-

ther King?” Of course, in church circles we are a bit better known, thanks to agreements such as *Porvoo*, *Meissen*, and the *Joint Declaration on Justification*. But we live with elephants in our room: we are a tiny body alongside the established churches and the Roman Catholic Church, and sometimes we might hear ourselves (or them) asking the question, “Why battle on?” Or, “Why not do what Lutherans in the Netherlands and in Alsace-Lorraine have done?”

Thirdly, together with other Christians, we have to engage ecumenically with the twin questions of what it means to be Christian in the complex and diverse society which is Great Britain today; and:

How do we engage with people of other faiths, or none?

Viewed from the perspectives of historians and sociologists, both the religious situation in the United Kingdom, and our own Lutheran role in it, are challenging. However, the questions that need to be asked are not *primarily* either historical or sociological questions, but *theological* questions. There are plenty of people who like to do historical research and escape from the complexity of the modern world (where they might have to *do* something) into the past, about which they can *do* nothing. There are plenty of people who do research, collect data, and then conduct sociological analysis on that data in order to describe how things are, how they have come to be as they are, and how they might be in the future. This is fine, but these are not *my* main tasks as a Lutheran pastor and educator in Great Britain: I am called to be a minister of Word and Sacrament, and a lifelong student of theology in the service of the church of Jesus Christ. I am called to be scripturally and confessionally literate in the specific situation of the United Kingdom, and to bring insights of scripture and the confessions to bear on that situation.

At first sight, it may seem that neither the world of scripture, nor the world of the confessions, have much to say to me in the complex world of today. That is far from being true. The first Christians also lived in a complex and “multi” world. They were themselves multi-ethnic: they were Jewish, and they were Gentile, whether they were Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, or strangers from Rome. They brought with them different languages, dif-

ferent cultures, and different ways of looking at the world. They lived in a multi-faith world in which we see Paul and his fellow apostles engaging in debate with Jews and many types of pagans, including those who worship at the altar of *the Unknown god*. The Nile had flowed into the Tiber. They debated among themselves over crucial questions about what being a Christian actually meant. They lived in an authoritarian world, where outward conformity—political correctness – was considered essential, and to be a minority was to court official displeasure and, maybe, death. They lived in a world where flagrant sexual immorality and corruption were all around them. Of course, they did not send text messages, worry about carbon footprints, or despair that the earth’s temperature was going up steadily, but otherwise, was their world so fundamentally different from our own? The early Christians had to work out what it meant to be faithful to a Lord, and, first and foremost, *which* Lord. This, they did with fear and trembling.

Of course, there *is* one big difference: first century Christians had no official recognition, except as anti-social atheists who refused to revere the state in the form of the emperor. Since the time of Constantine, however, the church has lived, in one form or another, in a symbiotic relationship with the state, and, sadly, has not been backward in using the instruments of the state to preserve and protect itself. The English Reformation of the 16th century provides ample evidence of the church—in its Protestant or Roman Catholic guise—using the state to deal with “heretics”. One of the first Lutheran martyrs in England, Dr Robert Barnes, was burned at the stake on 30 July 1540 together with two other Lutherans, while at the same time three Catholic priests were hanged, drawn and quartered in the same place. Our Reformation was even-handed!

If I turn to the Lutheran Confessions of the 16th century, they make me think about that early Christian world and to engage with the fundamental questions that have faced the church throughout its history. What sort of God do we worship? What is humankind’s relationship with that God? Where does Jesus of Nazareth fit into the picture? How do we explain suffering—whether it be that of Jesus or other human beings? Where must my loyalty lie—to earthly authorities or to the ultimate authority—and how are those two things related?

A final word, about language

Both scripture, and our church's confessions, force us to face up to the important questions of life, but how do we then communicate our answers in a world where God seems to be either sidelined, or dead?

I was born and brought up in a family that I would have to describe as "culturally Christian"—"Christian" because it was not obviously anything else—but a non-practicing family. I drifted into the church in my teens, largely through the influence of teachers and friends, but, in reality, because God called me through the Holy Spirit. I am grateful that I was not brought up as a practicing Christian, because that fact has helped me to understand how difficult it is for many people to understand the language that we Christians speak. The moment that we use words like *atonement*, *redemption*, or *sanctification*, most secular people lose the thread of what we are saying. We might believe that what we have to say to the world is of (literally) *crucial* importance, but if the world does not understand our distinctive religious language, then we are talking in vain. We have to take our complex theological questions and answers and struggle to put them into language that people can understand. How can we sing the Lord's song in the strange land of the modern world, where people understand neither our beliefs, nor our lifestyle, nor our language?

In the 21st century, we are facing the same questions that Christians have always faced, but we face them in time when the world's self-understanding has changed. The challenge for Christians today is to discover how to sing the Lord's song to people whose world view—secular or religious - may be very different from our own. This may demand from us a radical re-appraisal of how the church relates to the world. But Lutherans, with their understanding of *ecclesia semper reformanda*, should be uniquely placed to deal with radical re-appraisal.

Despite the problems, and there are many of them, I am glad to be a Lutheran living in the rainbow nation that is 21st century Great Britain, and to be forced to think about what constitutes a nation, and what it means to be a Christian in that nation.

Select Bibliography

General Books about the United Kingdom and Ireland

Danziger, Nick, *Danziger's Britain: A Journey to the Edge* (London: Flamingo, 1987). ISBN: 0-00-638249-5.

Davies, Norman, *The Isles: A History* (London: Papermac, 2000), ISBN: 0-333-69283-7.

Miles, David *The Tribes of Britain* (London, Phoenix, 2006), ISBN: 978-0-7538-1799-5.

Books about religion in the United Kingdom and Ireland

Davie, Martin, *A Guide to the Church of England* (London: Mowbray, 2008), ISBN: 978-19062-8613-2.

Martin, David, *A Sociology of English Religion* (London, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1967), ISBN: 0-435-82956-4.

Thomas, Terence (ed.), *The British: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices, 1800-1986* (London, Routledge, 1988), ISBN: 0-415-01300-3.

Books and articles about the Lutheran Churches in Great Britain

Bruch, Thomas (ed.), *Lutheran Churches in Britain* (London: Lutheran Council of Great Britain, 2004), ISBN.

Cienciala, George, (ed.), *The Lutheran Council of Great Britain*, (London, Lutheran Council of Great Britain, 1975), ISBN.

Long, Roy, *The Lutheran Church* (Exeter: Religious and Moral Education Press, 1984), ISBN: 0-08-029306-9.

Ratz, Edmund, *Ökumene und Diaspora—Erfahrungen in Großbritannien* [Article in the 1981 Yearbook of the Martin Luther Bund] (Erlangen: Martin Luther-Verlag, 1981), ISBN: 3-87513-022-7

RESPONDENTS: THE STRENGTH OF THE CHURCH

TWO CASE STUDIES IN ITALY: A MAJORITY CHURCH AND A MINORITY CHURCH



Dieter Kampen

The Roman Catholic Church in Italy

Because the Vatican lies within its boundaries, Italy has a special position in Europe. The Roman Catholic Church is very much present in public life, both politically and in the lives of individuals. Approximately 85 percent of Italians are Catholic. Although the proportion of people strongly bound to the church is higher than in most other European countries, the majority of Italians live out their personal faith as Catholics only when it is comfortable for them. Many criticize the church, but that does not mean that they no longer consider themselves Catholic. For many, being Italian and being Catholic is synonymous. The church plays an important role in national and personal identity. The issue of church membership is not relevant for Italians because there is no such thing as a church tax, and church membership is not registered by the state.

The church is funded by the state, mainly through the tax *otto per mille* ("8 per 1000"), from which Protestant churches also benefit.

Therefore, the situation that Davie described as "believing without belonging"¹ makes Italy different from other places, such as Germany. As church membership is based on baptism and as there aren't any other conditions, Italians without any ties to the church can live out their own faith without losing their church affiliation. In fact, they may even live for decades in dispute with the church and still remain Catholic.

So the Catholic church in Italy loses members less rapidly than in Germany and has a remarkable capacity to survive times of secularization. However, this concept only works because the church is financed by the state.

A small minority, however, also reacts aggressively to this close church-state affiliation. Since the baptism of children is widespread, financial or other benefits during adulthood are not necessary and a withdrawal from the Catholic church is not regulated, as there is virtually no way to discontinue being Catholic. For some, who are critical of the Catholic church, it is a terrible situation, from which they can't escape. Therefore, there are associations arising for the *sbattezzamento*, a strange word that means "debaptism", in German: "Enttaufung". These associations aim to defend the legal status of those persons who decide to leave the church by protecting them from unwanted religious funerals.

It is interesting to compare trends in Italy with those of the Protestant church in Germany. In Germany, too, one sees that the traditional parish today has difficulties attracting young people. The movements within the Catholic church correspond to the free evangelical churches, which are much more likely to inspire young people and also attract members at the expense of the traditional churches. As you can see, there are parallel developments in Catholicism and Protestantism. But there are also differences: the "free Catholic churches" remain within the Roman Catholic Church, while the "evangelical movement" forms new churches.

I do not know which model is more effective. The major Protestant churches lose many members and therefore lose significance. In later generations they will recuperate this through affiliation to church federations and associations. The Catholic church does not have these problems. But very conservative

¹ Grace Davie, "Religion in Europe in the 21st Century: The Factors to Take into Account," *European Journal of Sociology*, XLVII, 2 (2006) 271-96.

Catholic movements have a large influence over the whole church, including the Vatican, and alienate the great majority of members from the church.

Overall, I think that these movements or free churches in Europe will be limited and will remain a minority. They are too conservative and fundamentalist. Nevertheless, the large churches can learn something from these trends without abandoning their traditional structures, which may seem to be obsolete though they are not.

The Lutheran Church in Italy (Chiesa Evangelica Luterana in Italia)

As a small minority church, The Lutheran Church in Italy (CELI) is an interesting case. Only a few members are baptized into the church. Most people join our church through personal commitment. Membership is thus clearly a choice, a choice which must be reconfirmed each year, as members make a financial contribution. If members do not pay for three consecutive years they are taken off the membership list.

Nevertheless, CELI has a mentality and a relationship with the state similar to that of a large church. The reason for this is that a significant percentage of our members are Germans, who bring a different mentality to Italy. Also, congregations such as the one in Trieste, which are becoming more Italian and international, remain faithful to this original mentality.

This means that the attitude Davie² calls “vicarious religion” is very common. By vicarious, Davie means “the notion of religion performed by an active minority but on behalf of a much larger number, who (implicitly at least) not only understand, but, quite clearly, approve of what the minority is doing.” Many members rarely come to church and make only small church contributions. Certainly the number of active Christians is proportionally higher than in large churches, but most people do not participate regularly in congregational activities.

Davie says that the large European churches evolve into volunteer churches by choice. Generally, the fear associated with this evolution is that the number of members and funding will decrease. On the other hand, the hope is that the churches will become more alive and genuinely Christian. According to my observation, the fear is well justified; the hope, however, is far less realized. If a majority church evolves into a church of personal choice, the number of members will decrease naturally. This does not mean, however, that the remaining members have automatically a more acute sense of responsibility in relation to the church or that they develop an American mentality.

The relationship to the state

The relationship to the state is almost the same as it is in a majority church. CELI is now officially acknowledged by the state, which gives it certain privileges such as the right to conduct weddings and visit prisons and hospitals. Above all, the state finances two thirds of the church’s needs. This takes place primarily through the system by which Italians can earmark eight per mil (*otto per mille*) of their taxes either to the state or to one of six faith groups.

CELI is therefore very much interested in maintaining a good relationship with the state. With regard to membership, the CELI is very privileged. I attribute this good position to the following factors:

Nearly everybody recognizes that Martin Luther was the most important reformer. Our name is a seal of quality.

CELI is integrated into a worldwide communion of Lutheran churches. We are few, but we represent many.

There are “Lutheran” countries and one of them, Germany, is the most important trading partner of Italy. So we are supported by the embassies of Germany and of the Scandinavian countries. We are few, but we represent a large political and economic power.

CELI is integrated ecumenically. There are many small Protestant churches in Italy, but through the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy (FCEI) they have joint representation with the state. Without the Waldensians, who signed an agreement with the state before us, we prob-

² Grace Davie: Religion in Europe in the 21st Century: The Factors to Take into Account, *Arch. europ. sociol.*, XLVII, 2 (2006), pp. 271-296—0003-9756/06/0000-832

ably would have had no official acknowledgment by the state. Even ecumenism with the Roman Catholic Church is very important for a good relationship with the state. The good word of a bishop can open many doors in Italy.

I think that cooperation with the state is important for the Lutheran church and should be maintained in the future. The conditions for this collaboration to continue are favorable. Lutheran theology differentiates very clearly between church and state, but, unlike some other evangelical churches, does not reject cooperation in principle. On the contrary, church and state complement each other and both serve God in their own way. This cooperation is provisional until the realm of God comes. It is not firmly fixed, but can be adapted to respective conditions. The Lutheran church can, therefore, cooperate quite flexibly and without ideological reservations with the state.

Presence in public life

Presence in public life is also very important for us because it is through public life that we can reach many people. I think that as Lutherans in Italy we have much to give: not only our theology and liturgy, but also our contribution to ethical issues, to the understanding of church–state relationships, to social politics, to work, etc. Offering these important contributions to congregation members only would not be correct.

We have approximately 4,000 regular members in Italy, but there are perhaps 20,000 baptized Lutherans. There are 40,000 people who choose to earmark a portion of their taxes to CELI. But, since only about 40 percent of Italians practice this and the tax revenue of those who do not express a choice is distributed proportionally, we receive the revenue for around 100,000 people.³ It would be unfair to be financed by 100,000 people and then give our attention only to the 4,000 members of our church. Furthermore, our Christian mission directs us to include ones that do not finance us as well. It is therefore important for us to be present

in the public sphere. Thanks to our good name, our integration into a global communion, the support of Lutheran states and our good ecumenical involvement, we have many opportunities.

We have many more opportunities than we can take up given our small numbers. Help comes in the form of pastors sent from Germany, but they need a few years to learn about Italy and the Italian language. This means we have not yet exhausted our potential.

The word works

Despite the foregoing, we can move things forward, even without much personal intervention. In Italy, Lutheran theology is practically unknown and for some people, who look for alternatives to the Catholic church, it seems very new and interesting. Our traditional theology and liturgy may look even very modern to some. Because we are new to the Italian context, people have high expectations about us and are ready to get involved.

Our theology certainly is one of the strengths that we attempt to utilize. Through books and the Internet—we have at present five homepages for spreading Lutheran theology—we let the word of God work. I think we must have more trust in the word of God and in our theology. Martin Luther did not have to do public relations. He wrote articles and gave them to the press free of charge. Likewise, if we write good articles and put them on the Internet, then we can sleep, while the word works. The Internet is also very democratic and people do not need any authorization from the church hierarchy to use it.

Integration

The ability to integrate is particularly important for the future of any institution.

Three weeks ago in Trieste, I confirmed five young people. Four of these young people have one Italian and one foreign parent (from Austria, Slovenia, the United Kingdom and Argentina). The fifth has two Italian parents, but the German grandmother lives with the family. This group

³ All the numbers are very approximate and vary from year to year.

of confirmed young people offers an excellent example of integration.

Integration is possible through a common faith, which makes room for national differences. The church can make an important contribution toward the unity of Europe and at present offers an image of a positive future.

Integration is possible through common language. In the Trieste congregation, we have used Italian only for the past nine years, but during this short period of time the congregation has become very international. Now, once a month, a church service is celebrated in German. This careful use of the German language is not alienating, but enriching.

Integration is possible also through tolerance. Jesus went to the sinners. He went to the women. He made no distinction between Jews and Greeks. Now we invite all people, including divorced or homosexuals. In Italy, many perceive this approach as an authentic practice of faith. While the Catholic church looks to its canon law, we see the person.

In the area of religious integration, the Lutheran church offers positive conditions for involvement that are different to those of the Reformed church. The Reformed church seeks more church integration because it does not fear

change. The Lutheran church has a clear confession of faith and has no interest in modifying or replacing it. Therefore, the Lutheran church looks for autonomous partners.

Nevertheless, it has great potential for integration. All Protestant churches learned from Luther. As the starting point of the complex Protestant cosmos, the Lutheran church can be accepted by all. At the level of the local congregation we can integrate Protestant Christians from various denominations. They keep their respective characteristics, but can also recognize the Lutheran church at the same time. Some local congregations also accept Catholics, but I do not think this is a good idea, because the unity of a church must be established through the common faith, not through human sympathy.

In ecumenical dealings with the Catholic and Orthodox churches we can take an intermediary role. When we are large enough, we can be the common voice of the Protestants in relations with the state. I think that for historical and theological reasons we can become the focal point of communication among the Protestant churches, and we should develop and nurture this idea so that other Protestant churches give us this role.



The Free Sunday Campaign – A Case Study from Croatia

Enoch Seba

When considering the strengths of the Croatian Protestant and Free churches and their contribution to the public realm, one must inevitably come to the conclusion that their influence is unfortunately rather insignificant. An obvious reason for this is the fact that Protestants are a small minority in a predominantly Roman Catholic country.

However, it must also be admitted that, in the post-war period, the Protestant churches and Free Churches were preoccupied with their legal status. This focus indirectly prevented them from engaging in the public arena. Generally speaking, the human resources in these churches are probably insufficient and have sometimes been wasted in internal arguments and schisms. It is probably worthwhile to mention that during the war and in the years that followed, these churches were faithfully serving society by distributing humanitarian relief.

That work helped the churches acquire state recognition and financial support. Today, Protestant churches have a broad range of opportunities to engage in society under Croatian law, but they have not yet fully taken advantage of these openings.

Therefore, I am presenting a campaign that was initiated and led by Catholic believers, which is known as the Free Sunday Campaign, since in my opinion it corresponds to certain aspects of the discussion which is presented in Davie's article. Protestant churches have not been officially involved and their participation and support has been limited. Still, the campaign offers an illustration of the strengths of the Church.

The Background

According to the available data, 12 percent of all Croatian employees work in the trade sector and

75 percent of these are women.¹ In 2003, various sources indicated that between 30,000 and 40,000 employees were regularly working on Sundays, although Croatian labor law allowed Sunday work only "in case of necessity" (article 38).² Trade unions were repeatedly warning the public that various workers' rights were being continuously violated. These included the right to a day of rest, the right to paid overtime work, the right to receive a supplement for working on Sundays (35 percent) or holidays (50 percent). These violations meant unemployment was not reduced and that families and employees, especially women, were under more pressure. Because they feared losing their jobs, workers would rarely protest or claim their rights. They knew that they were easily "replaceable". Early in 2003, five years after Sunday trading had become a standard practice, several different organizations decided to launch a campaign to force the Croatian Parliament to ban Sunday trading.

The initiators of the campaign were Croatian Caritas and the Franciscan Institute for the Culture of Peace. A number of major trade unions collaborated with these two church-related organizations. During the second stage of the campaign, a third Catholic organization got involved—the Centre for the Promotion of Social Teaching of the Church. In order to understand their influence and roles, I will offer a short overview of the campaign's course.

¹ Igor Bertović. "Ekonomski aspekti rada nedjeljom" in *Kultura nedjelje i dostojanstvo radnika* [Economic aspects of Sunday "Sunday in Culture and dignity of workers"]. (ed. Stjepan Balaban and Gordan Črpić; Zagreb: Centar za promicanje socijalnog nauka Crkve and Kršćanska sadašnjost, 2005), 37-47: 43.

² *Zakon o trgovini* [Labor Law] (*Narodne novine* [official gazette], 38/1995, 54/1995, 65/1995, 17/2001, 82/2001, 114/2003, 142/2003.)

The main developments during the period from 2003-2008

In April 2003, Croatian Caritas and the Franciscan Institute for the Culture of Peace initiated the signing of a petition called Sunday Trading Means Human Trafficking. The petition begins by saying, "In the name of human dignity, of human, workers' and religious rights, we ask the Parliament and the Croatian Government to enact a law that would ban all trading on Sundays and holidays."³ The petition was distributed throughout the country (in 80 towns and over 1400 Catholic parishes) and in 30 days, more than 300,000 citizens had signed the petition, which was then delivered to the Prime Minister, Iвица Račan, on 8 September 2003. Simultaneously, intensive lobbying took place, as campaign representatives managed to meet with several government ministers and various members of Parliament.⁴ As a result, Parliament prepared a bill to amend the trading law⁵ on 21 October 2003, which would come into effect on 1 January 2004.

However, seven chains of retail stores lodged a constitutional complaint before the bill had come into effect. In addition, the director of the International Monetary Fund's mission in Croatia, Hans Flickenschild, brought additional pressure to bear by releasing a statement saying that his institution opposed the ban on Sunday trading.⁶ Less than four months after the introduction of the bill, the Constitutional Court decided to repeal the law on the grounds that it

was discriminatory in terms of the size of shops that were allowed to be open on Sundays.

Anticipating such a development, the Croatian Bishops' Conference on 10 March 2004 summoned Croatian Caritas, the Centre for the Promotion of Social Teaching of the Church and the Franciscan Institute for the Culture of Peace to draw up a document outlining the problems of Sunday trading. There had been an earlier message on the Christian meaning and celebration of Sunday, issued by the Croatian Bishops on 10 June 1997,⁷ but at that moment there was a need to deepen the discussion. The case for a work-free Sunday demanded a stronger and more comprehensive argument, which would be presented from an economic, social, anthropological and cultural perspective. The resulting text, entitled Sunday for the Sake of Man⁸ was presented in April 2004, together with the results of a comprehensive survey, which found that 70 percent of the population supported the amendments and appendices to the trading law, while only 17 percent voted against them.⁹ In addition, a statement on the protection of Sunday culture, created by the Iustitia et Pax commission of the Croatian Bishops' Conference on 19 January 2005, pushed the cause of a special status for Sunday. It called for the adoption of a new trading law that would protect both the culture of Sunday and rights of those employed in the trading sector.

Over the next three years, the campaign tried to raise political awareness on the issue, although the process was very slow and the politicians were often hesitant to meet the campaign's advocates. During this period the campaign drew on the reasoning found in the two documents mentioned above and a somewhat wider specter of arguments was pursued—the protection of workers' dignity, promotion of the family, the economic argument, the cultural argument and the results of the peti-

³ Croatian Caritas and Franciscan Institute for the Culture of Peace, petition to the government and the Croatian parliament, May 2003. The text allowed exceptions during the tourist season and only for grocery shops.

⁴ The only political party that expressed public support to the campaign was the Croatian Peasant Party, whose president and then president of the Parliament, handed in the signatures of party's officials on 28 May 2003.

⁵ Full text available at <http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/307038.html>

⁶ Marinko Petković, "Izjava Hansa Flickenschilda iznenađuje, a doima se kao diktat", Vjesnik [news], December 9, 2003, 7. Online: <http://ns1.vjesnik.com/pdf/2003%5C12%5C19%5C07A7.PDF>

⁷ www.ffdi.hr/mep/06-euharistija/biskupi_o_nedjelji.htm

⁸ Nedjelja radi čovjeka [Sunday for the sake of man] (Zagreb: Croatian Bishops' Conference, 2004).

⁹ Balaban, Stjepan, Gordan Črpić and Marijana Kompes. Centar za promicanje socijalnog nauka Crkve [Center for the promotion of church social science]. Deseta obljetnica djelovanja (1998–2008), (Zagreb, 2008), 160.

tion.¹⁰ Eventually, this steady campaign proved efficient and a new trading law was adopted by the Parliament in July 2008.¹¹

The current situation

The new law came into effect early in 2009. The exceptions to the ban were better specified, and the control and inspection mechanisms were more easily enforceable than in 2003. Nevertheless, from the beginning the implementation of the law was accompanied by negative media coverage. Newspapers and television channels tended to report on this issue chiefly through the lens of power relations. Several chains of retail stores had already lodged another constitutional complaint, claiming that the law implied disrespect for market freedoms and a “violation of the legitimate expectations of people who have invested hundreds of millions of euros in building shopping malls and supermarkets.” Finally, only a week ago, the Constitutional Court issued a new decision, again abolishing the law. Although at this moment it seems that the campaign has ultimately been ineffectual, I am firmly convinced that its course, methods and goals can teach us a lot about the role of religion in Croatian society in the 21st century.

Even though the issue of Sunday trading was present in Croatian society for several years, it was not debated publicly. Therefore, the campaign included a research survey, and a public relations agency was engaged to help plan the course of the campaign, including the way to presenting the research results.¹² The next step was the petition-signing, which was organized in three different settings in order to reach diverse target groups: on city squares, in front of church buildings after worship services and in trade union headquarters. A variety of media advertisements were developed to raise awareness around the issue and “make it

real” by bringing it to the forefront of public consciousness. The idea was to gain as wide support to the cause of the campaign as possible.

The campaign also targeted decision makers. Intensive meetings with trade unions and other social partners were staged in order to prepare adequate amendment proposals. There was continuous lobbying of members of Parliament, ministers and a number of party officials. Parish priests, church-related organizations and bishops were constantly reminded that they should exercise their influence in communicating with the representatives of secular authorities. All these things sometimes required much more energy and time than the initial steps aimed at the general population. Also, the progress was not easily noticeable, and indifference, or even opposition, was much more frequent.

During the later stages of the campaign, notable attention was paid to drawing up official documents as a reinforcement of the church’s argument within the specific context and time. Those documents were meant to justify the demand for the institutional protection of Sunday.¹³ Also, their purpose was to suggest a set of guidelines which would steer the adoption of the new trading law.

And last, but not the least, the campaign received ongoing prayer support—some monastic communities prayed devotedly for the course and the outcomes of the campaign.¹⁴

The intended goals

The primary goal of the campaign was to achieve institutional protection of work-free Sundays. This protection was sought because there were countless cases of manipulation of that freedom. By banning Sunday trading, more space would be created to

¹⁰ Ibid., 163.

¹¹ Full text available at <http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/default.aspx 87/2008>.

¹² Conversation with Vice Batarelo, Vice-President of Croatian Caritas, March 2009.

¹³ “In the same way in which human right to labor is institutionally protected, the right to rest on those days when the majority of the society takes rest (and within the European civilizational order this day is Sunday) should be institutionally protected as well. “*Nedjelja radi čovjeka*, 29.

¹⁴ Batarelo mentioned a specific community of Carmelite nuns. Conversation, March 2009.

discuss Sunday as a day for people, a concept that has been part of European cultural heritage.

Although the media have primarily focused on this goal and most of the debates revolved around the arguments for and against such institutional protection and its potential consequences, there was another major objective, which was probably somewhat less clearly observed by the wider community. The campaign was also encouraging participation in society and challenging the passivity that prevailed in the Croatian national character, which seemed to dictate that nothing could ever be positively changed in society. The campaign aimed to help the people, both as the laity of the church and as citizens of civil society, to understand they have responsibility for the human community. This was reflected in the efforts directed at the believers in influential organizations, who were supposed to advocate free Sunday, but who “should not be content with the political and social protection of Sunday, but should also and primarily live out its values, both Christian ones and those that are more general, human and civilizational ones.”¹⁵

From the standpoint of Christian ethics, it seems vital to take notice of the fact that such a two-fold intent implies that the Church’s responsibility for the society is fulfilled not only through institutional methods and structural changes, but also through the practical involvement of individual believers and local communities, and the application of faith in everyday life. In other words, the campaign’s ambition was to make a difference within the society at large, but this difference is closely related to the transformation of the church itself. Another way of expressing this would be to claim that any change at the institutional level is unsustainable without the support of faith communities in which the life of every single believer is a place where change is expected.

¹⁵ Nedjelja radi čovjeka, 45.

Conclusion

Finally, if the entire course of the campaign is taken into account, it seems that both the beginning and the future of the campaign heavily depended on solidarity among the community members. It is the solidarity with the (mostly) female workers in shops, whose rights are continuously violated, which led to a strong response to the petition and created early pressure on the policy makers. It is this kind of solidarity that will be a prerequisite for extending the campaign’s effects beyond mere institutional protection and in developing a “free Sunday” that will authentically promote the comprehensive development of both the community and individuals, uninhibited by the rush of the market and a profit-oriented worldview. And it is the solidarity that will keep the church believers mobilized and willing to express their personal beliefs in accordance with the social teaching of the church, thus countering the effects of their living out their Catholicism as “vicarious religion”.

The whole campaign is an example of a historical church which is “clearly losing [its] capacity to discipline the religious thinking of large sections of the population” and finds itself as a minority when it tries to raise its voice in the public arena. Suddenly, the church must reach for a different religious economy, to use Davie’s terminology, and encourage the voluntarism of its members. Belonging is no longer based exclusively on the sense of obligation, but is upgraded through specific choices, by which the believers identify themselves as believers, and these choices have public consequences. The tension between these two economies creates, and will continue to create, a spectrum of opportunities in advancing the religious influence within Croatian society.



The situation in France: A church on the move

Alain Hazoumé

Grace Davie's study¹ brings to light the changes Europe's historical churches are currently undergoing as a result of both internal factors directly related to modern lifestyles and consumption patterns, and external factors associated with massive influx of immigrants, mainly from Africa.

The evolution of the "small" Lutheran Church of France summarizes in a particular way changes taking place globally.

Before discussing the changes underway within the Lutheran Church of France, I think it is worthwhile to look at the past, given the fact that churches are often a reflection of a nation's history.

Historical overview

Broadly speaking, Lutheranism in France is represented by two churches, the Lutheran Church of Alsace-Lorraine and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of France.

With only around 35,000 members, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of France is very much a minority church compared to the Reformed Church of France, which claims a membership of 400,000 people who are active in the church or using its services.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of France is composed of two "inspectories," geographical regions—Montbéliard and the surrounding region, and Paris, which includes congregations in Paris and the surrounding region as well as in Lyon and Nice.

The experience and lessons learned that I am about to share specifically concern the Paris inspectory, of which I am a member.

Inner European migration of Lutherans

The first Lutheran services of worship were celebrated in Paris at the beginning of the 17th century at the Swedish and then the Danish embassies. In a country in which only the Roman Catholic mass was recognized, this was the only way to celebrate the Lutheran liturgy, short of going underground. These services were initially held in Swedish and Danish, but beginning in the 18th century, they were also held in French.

With these embassy services, Paris became the birthplace of the first Lutheran community in France, an extremely diverse mixture of German princes and lords, of Swedish elite, diplomats and military officers, of Alsatian merchants as well as workers of various nationalities.

It was not until 1809 that the Lutheran confession was officially recognized, in particular by the creation in Paris of the first Lutheran consistory by Napoleonic decree.

In response to the massive arrival of German workers, the German Mission (later to become the Internal Mission) was created. The role of this organization was to preach the gospel to immigrants of German origin and provide diaconal services to them. The creation of Protestant schools and social services, in particular, made it possible for them to keep their Lutheran faith and pass it on to their children.

Thus, French Lutheranism in Paris and the surrounding region was born and flourished, primarily as a result of the energy brought by immigrants from Northern Europe up to the beginning of the 20th century.

Immigration from Africa

A second wave of immigration in the second half of the 20th century (from the 1950s onwards) gave new life to the Lutheran Church of Paris together

¹ Grace Davie: Religion in Europe in the 21st Century: The Factors to Take into Account, *Arch. europ. sociol.*, XLVII, 2 (2006), pp. 271-296—0003-9756/06/0000-832

with a new complexion. This time the immigrants came from the former colonial countries in the South, black Africa and Madagascar.

The Lutheran Church of France experienced a new demographic surge and, today, most Lutheran congregations in Paris, and particularly in the surrounding area, are characterized by a very large degree of social and ethnic diversity.

The immigrants from black Africa who joined the Lutheran churches were mainly Cameroonian and Togolese and came in the wake of the extensive evangelization campaigns conducted by Scandinavian missionaries.

Putting aside the socio-political events which sparked a significant wave of immigration from former French colonies, it could not be taken for granted from a sociological point of view that these immigrants would become members of the local churches rather than seek to create their own religious communities.

Many of these immigrants preferred being welcomed into local established churches, which were more often Lutheran than Reformed, instead of forming their own "ethnic chapels."

It seems that Lutheranism, because of the emotional connection its hymns and "ritualistic" liturgy offered, better met the needs and expectations of these immigrants.

In addition, the more assertive exercise and expression of piety and religious fervor within the Lutheran church, in the form of prayer groups and groups meeting in homes, reassured these immigrants and encouraged them to become members of our churches.

As Grace Davie shows, we could say that the arrival of these immigrants radically changed the religious landscape; it deeply changed the makeup of Lutheran congregations, especially in the Paris region, where a genuine mosaic of communities, cultures and traditions is emerging.

Integration policy in the church

Unlike Great Britain, where a "group identity" (*communautarisme*) policy was applied, France, in keeping with the principle of the one, indivis-

ible republic, has for several decades pursued a policy of integration. As a result, new immigrants tended to integrate into local churches rather than strive to create specific, ethnic congregations.

However, this phenomenon is not linear and constant; there are churches within France, in Paris and its surrounding area in particular, which are entirely composed of immigrants from the same geographical area, and are sharing a common community identity.

Nevertheless, the overall trend is toward bringing geographical communities together by incorporating immigrant churches into the local churches, as is the case with the Lutherans of Paris.

Thus, several congregations within the Paris inspectorate that originally were exclusively French or European are now made up of persons 50 percent or more of whom are of foreign origin, especially African or Malagasy.

For example, at least 90 percent of persons attending Sunday services at Martin Luther Church in Saint Denis, one of the suburban congregations, are African.

The situation is similar in the church of Saint-Marc in Noisy-le-Sec (eastern Paris).

It should be noted that this predominant foreign presence at Sunday services is not always reflected in the membership of, and active participation in bodies in charge of the functioning and administration of the congregation, in particular at the church council level.

However, the situation is changing in this regard and the trend in some cases is being reversed. For example, in the last few years membership on the Saint Denis church council has started to reflect the makeup of the persons attending church services, since half of the council members are now persons of foreign origin.

Lastly, at the institutional level, the regional church of Paris has not stood idle either, as a third of its clergy is now composed of persons of foreign origin.

In view of this brief history, one thing is clear: these immigrants, who are often French nationals or permanent residents, make up an important part of the congregations of the regional church of Paris.

The consequences of this development, including the influence that the immigrant population

is having on traditional local churches, therefore merit examination.

Foreign contribution to the rebirth of local churches

The Lutheran churches of Paris have changed as a result of the second wave of immigration from the African continent (black Africa, Madagascar).

This change is not related only to the new and obviously different faces of these new church members, but rather, to deeper aspects that have markedly transformed the life of local churches.

Better attendance at Sunday service

This development is a typical characteristic of the immigrant congregation.

Unlike French Protestants, who were profoundly influenced by the secularization process and have progressively abandoned worship services and liturgies over the past 30 years, immigrants have breathed new life into these congregations by their effective, regular attendance of services and their attachment to the liturgy and pastoral acts.

This consistent involvement in the life of the congregation seems to have had a positive effect on the original church members who, following the example of their African counterparts, have also become more regular church-goers.

Participation in church services, in particular through the singing of hymns and praises

Compared to Reformed Christians, Lutherans have always attached greater importance to hymns and sung responses during worship. This is true also for immigrants, who often endeavor to form choirs.

In the northern part of Paris, the congregation of Saint Paul was able to avert closure (due to a sharp decline in church attendance and partici-

pation in church life) thanks to the positive contribution of a Cameroonian choir. The members of this choir became fully integrated and took responsibility for running the church, situated in Barbés, a very lively district of Paris.

The revival of community life within the church

Immigrants also seem to have re-taught local parishioners the importance of belonging to a community and living together in their common home, the church. These immigrants, who journeyed far from their homelands, sometimes against their will, see the church as their new spiritual home.

This fundamental sense of community through the church, in which Christ is the common link, seems to have been lost over time in traditional churches, but is now being rekindled as a result of the second wave of immigration from the South.

The importance of bearing witness and giving thanks to God

Immigrant worshipers, because of the vitality of their faith, tend to express their thanks and gratitude towards the Lord more spontaneously and intensively than local or traditional parishioners.

This demonstrative way of showing their faith, which clashes with the sense of propriety generally considered appropriate in France (anything related to religious expression because of its personal nature can be disconcerting), turns out to be quite enriching.

I have noted that this attitude with regard to the expression of faith can be observed not only among immigrants from black Africa and Madagascar, but also among young northern Europeans, who come to spend a year in France to engage in a new church experience and who are not afraid of the fervor and power of Christian witness. It is, however, possible that as these populations settle down, the overwhelming influence of secularization in France could make them lose this spontaneity.

Conclusion

The great French author, André Malraux, predicted that the 21st century would be “spiritual (and religious) or not!”

Based on the findings of her study, Grace Davie responds in the affirmative, noting a strong but ambiguous religious revival in Europe. I believe that the modest size of the French Lutheran church heightens the impact of changes resulting from shifts in lifestyles and values in today’s society on our “way” of believing and “being” church.

In addition, the magnitude of the migratory movement in France, and in particular in and around Paris, could have radically changed the complexion of the Lutheran church.

And yet, the trend we are actually witnessing in our Paris churches is quite the opposite. What we are seeing is a genuine sharing of religious “culture” and mutual enrichment within churches, which are diverse and in a state of constant change, but which remain united around a historical, liturgical, structural and consensual basis.

PART V:

LUTHERAN SPIRITUALITY AS A GIFT TO SOCIETY

THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH IN THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA AND ITS “VOICE” IN A MODERN, OPEN SOCIETY



Simon Sever

Key information

Slovenia, officially the Republic of Slovenia, is a country in Central Europe bordering Italy to the west, the Adriatic Sea to the southwest, Croatia to the south and east, Hungary to the northeast, and Austria to the north. The capital of Slovenia is Ljubljana. Slovenia has been part of the Roman Empire; the Republic of Venice; the principality of Carantania (only modern Slovenia's northern part); the Holy Roman Empire; the Habsburg Monarchy; the Austrian Empire (later known as Austria-Hungary); the State of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs; the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929); part of the Kingdom of Italy; and between the two World Wars was occupied by Germany, Italy, Hungary, and the Independent State of Croatia (1941–1945); and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, from 1945 until independence in 1991. Slovenia is a member of the European Union (EU), the Euro zone, the Schengen area, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Council of Europe and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Politics

The Slovenian head of state is the president, who is elected by popular vote every five years. The

executive branch is headed by the prime minister and the council of ministers or cabinet, who are elected by the National Assembly. The bicameral Parliament of Slovenia is characterized by an asymmetric duality, as the Constitution does not accord equal powers to both chambers. It consists of the National Assembly (*Državni zbor*), and the National Council (*Državni svet*). The National Assembly has 90 members, 88 of which are elected by all the citizens in a system of proportional representation, while two are elected by the indigenous Hungarian and Italian minorities. Elections take place every four years. It is the supreme representative and legislative institution, exercising legislative and electoral powers as well as control over the Executive and the Judiciary. The National Council has 40 members, appointed to represent social, economic, professional and local interest groups. Among its best known powers is the authority of the “postponing veto”—it can demand that the parliament debate again a piece of legislation.

Economy

Slovenia has a high-income developed economy which enjoys the second highest (after Cyprus) Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita (USD 28,010.76 was the estimate for 2008) of the new EU countries, which is 93 percent of the EU average. Although the country's relatively high inflation declined to 2.3 percent in 2006 (prior to adoption of the Euro), in October 2007 it reached 5.1 percent year-on-year, exceeding the average in the Euro zone. Slovenia's economy has started to grow more strongly in the last few years, by 4.3

percent in 2004 and 2005, 5.9 percent in 2006 and 6.8 percent in 2007, after relatively slow growth of 2.8 percent in 2003. In the first three quarters of 2008, the economy expanded at an annual rate of 5 percent. Despite economic success, Slovenia faces some challenges. A big portion of the economy remains in state hands and foreign direct investment in Slovenia is one of the lowest in the EU per capita. Taxes are relatively high, the labor market is seen as inflexible, and industries are losing sales to China, India, and elsewhere. During the 2000s, privatizations were taken place in the banking, telecommunications, and public utility sectors. Restrictions on foreign investment are being dismantled, and foreign direct investment is expected to increase. Slovenia is the economic front-runner of the countries that joined the EU in 2004, was the first new member which adopted the euro on 1 January 2007 and held the presidency of the European Union in the first half of 2008.

Demographics

Slovenia's main ethnic group is Slovene (83 percent). Ethnic groups from other parts of the former Yugoslavia (Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, Macedonian, Montenegrin) form 5.3 percent, and the Hungarian, Albanian, Roma, Italian and other minorities form 2.8 percent of the population. Ethnic affiliation of 8.9 percent was either undeclared or unknown. Life expectancy in 2003 was 72.2 years for men and 80 years for women. Slovenia ranks number 4 on the list of countries by suicide rate. With 99 inhabitants per square kilometer (256/sq mi), Slovenia ranks low among the European countries in population density (compared to 320/km² (829/sq mi) for the Netherlands or 195/km² (505/sq mi) for Italy). The Notranjska-Kras statistical region has the lowest population density while the Central Slovenian statistical region has the highest. Approximately 51 percent of the population lives in urban areas and 49 percent in rural areas.¹

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slovenia>

The Evangelical Church in the Republic of Slovenia in numbers

After the last census in 2002, slightly less than 20,000 inhabitants of the Republic of Slovenia (or less than 1 percent of the whole population) identified themselves as Protestants. About 14,700 believers belong to the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession. Since the previous census in 1991 this number has risen slightly. Most of these church members live in Prekmurje (at the eastern tip of Slovenia, where there are about 13 Evangelical church municipalities). However, there is still a scattering of Evangelicals living in Maribor, the capital of Slovenia, Ljubljana, and Primorska). That census showed that 74 percent of the people defined themselves as Roman Catholics, 4 percent as Orthodox Christians, 2 percent as Muslims. The rest declined to name a religious affiliation. That sort of statistical breakdown concerning the Protestant community in Slovenia has remained consistent for the past 50 years. About 1 percent of identified Protestants want to be seen as an Evangelical community or "mini community."

The Evangelical Church in the Republic of Slovenia as an international ecclesiastical legal entity and its impact on society

The Evangelical Church in the Republic of Slovenia became an international ecclesiastical legal entity in 1952. At that time it became a member of Lutheran World Federation (LWF). In Slovenia, as part of the former Yugoslavia, the church had officially existed since 1950 when its constitution was adopted. But it wasn't a legal entity because religious communities were considered mere associations. On the basis of an agreement between the government of the Republic of Slovenia's ministry of defense and the church, it became a legal entity on 25 January 2000.

According to the Slovene Constitution there is separation of church and state, and that is why the church is acting according to its laws and regulations adopted in December 2000. These church

laws affect the church only. Laws of the Republic of Slovenia have priority. Even though the legal situation of the Evangelical church was defined very late, the principles were present among Slovenians since the Reformation. In that time it was known as the Slovenian Church with its superintendent Primož Trubar. At that time it was a non-hierarchical community of believers gathered together on the basis of the gospel. Spoken word was not enough for these believers in a different kind of church, so they prepared the necessary theological and ecclesiastical documents. They started schools, founded libraries, and raised national consciousness. The church focused on social distress, took care of higher education of clergy, and pleaded for a different, simpler art.

Because of persecution, we do not talk about the Slovene church, but at most about Slovene Protestantism, which was supposed to be abolished completely during the 16th and 17th centuries. Around 1610, Janez Vajkard Valvasor (the author of *Slava Vojvodine Kranjske*, written in German) wrote, "When, as we have heard by now, not only the ecclesiastical gospel servants and teachers, but also serfs, townsmen, and aristocrats of this religion had to leave Styria, Carinthia, Carniola and Princely County of Gorizia (Slovenian region at that time) without exception, and when no one left to get caught except a few gentlemen and countrymen, his princely Excellency firmly decided to do away with the leftovers and not to suffer the Lutheran midge in these countries anymore". So they set a deadline for citizens to join the Roman Catholic Church, or sell their homes and leave the country with their families. Some chose the second option and inhabited the empire in Hungary, Czech Republic, or elsewhere. When the Lutheran church disappeared from Carniola, the Reformation was at its end.

It has been said: "Sprouts and blossoms grown out of the Reformation in Slovenia, especially in the field of religion, were cut off, but the roots remained and didn't dry completely."

The principle of Protestantism

While Protestantism in Slovenia was "dying", in Europe (Germany and the Scandinavian countries),

it was spreading. The principle of Protestantism, which Paul Tillich (1886-1965) talked about, concerns historical reality and the future. Even though there will be the end of Protestantism, that doesn't mean the end of the Protestantism principle. Just the opposite: this would mean an effect of Protestantism principle, the result of its prophecy and along with this prediction of a new manifestation of its truth and power." The question is how this principle is accepted outside the ecclesiastical community, if it is accepted at all. Thus, what is the Tillich Protestant principle? It talks about "excusing a person in front of God", which basically means being aware of the worth and dignity of people.

Modern open society and the role of the church

Slovenian society nowadays is open. The pluralistic worldview is guaranteed by law, thus ensuring the actions and beliefs of Christian churches and other religious communities. There is a competition of world views in Slovenia as well. Since the violent defeat of the Reformation in Slovenia, this competition has been pushed aside, because Catholicism has been dominant. Between 1945 and the beginning of the 1990s the socialist order defined the worldview, but, fortunately, not completely successfully. Marginal communities like the Evangelical Church in the Republic of Slovenia, with its 20,000 members, does not want (nor can it) compete with the still large and influential Roman Catholic Church with its many institutions, but it does want to emphasize its "Protestantism principle". The small church can do this among its membership by spreading the gospel, by its diaconal work, which is restricted because of personal and material considerations, and with its theological discussions made available to the general public. The Protestantism principle of excusing people in front of God is not only important for a personal life of an individual, but it's of even greater importance for the coexistence of peoples. Theologically this means giving people the power to deal consciously with their own acts and not push them aside; it means

offering the power that prevents people from constantly looking down on themselves or praising and discriminating against others; it means giving them the power to understand that God unconditionally accepts them.

a) Protestant principle and humanity's acting and participating

Christians derive their way of acting and dealing with people out of this understanding. God's acceptance is not generally accepted but a matter of confession for people who accept it as part of their faith. If people refuse to believe in this acceptance, it will have little influence on their lives. The work of the church in an open society, especially a minority church, has both its good and bad sides. One disadvantage is that not many people take notice of this work. Only a small number of people who are part of this church notice it. An advantage is that the weak are promised a future. "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise." (1Cor. 27) This historically conditional confession cannot be literally transferred into today. Contemporary people don't look for broad masses, mightiness, splendor, and influence, but they feel much better in a smaller community. They are looking for a simple, people-friendly and transparent community. This might be the positive side of the Evangelical church, and Protestantism in Slovenia.

If the Evangelical church in Slovenia is happy about having an open society, which enables freedom, then it does not envy the openness of other worldviews. But they must not exploit the openness at the expense of others. "Live and let live." It is a worn out phrase, but suggests wisdom and tolerance. In an open society the Evangelical church also has to look for its tasks. Society does not determine the basic mission of the church, such as spreading the gospel. The church justifies its mission by following the biblical mandate to "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news." (Mk 16, 15) Because of its support of human rights, an open society has to leave space for the church to fulfill its mission among those who accept it.

b) The Evangelical church and politics/culture

It is absolutely normal that churches in democratic societies are part of the political and cultural landscape. The Evangelical church, though few in number, is aware of this. It tries to be productively critical, in its social critique. It uses its voice to contribute to a more humane society and better coexistence among all the citizens, regardless of their religion. It strives for equality. The church is trying to spread its message without appearing like a monolith so that the population is open to Christianity. Spreading its thoughts, it also tries to encourage education, diligence, an enterprising spirit, and personal responsibility (considering general human values and norms), which are the foundation for each development. Protestantism is a tiny bridge in politics and culture that tries to unite civil and Christian society, separated by diverging values around freedom, personal responsibility and tolerance.

Conclusion

Instead of offering a conclusion, I would like to quote from President Danilo Türk's words, spoken at the national day celebration on 31 of October 2008, Reformation Day, in Cankarjev Dom in Ljubljana. The Slovene president, who doesn't belong to any religious group, said:

We live in a time which is empty ethically. Our time, for a change, did away with ideological exclusiveness and ideological predominance. This change was welcome and accepted with relief. However, we didn't experience the end of history. There was no deliverance. Consumption prevails, accompanied by political correctness and naïve expectations, created by the process of globalization. It is not the first time that illusion in the world is brought forward.

It is not hard to find out how empty these expectations are and how insincere political correctness can be. Under this thin layer of dominating illusions there are, as always, cynicism and vulgarity of economical and political power. The present

global financial crisis is just the newest and the most visible symptom of our problematic reality. Our time is calling for affirmation of ethics in economy and politics – on both levels, national as well as global. Our time is calling for responsible acting in economy and politics, responsible order, and laws to respect. This responsibility must be seen in solving problems brought by the current world financial crisis and in realizing long-term tasks to protect the environment. Our time is calling for improving the state of our politics, for giving up cynicism and resentfulness, for giving up cheap moralizing and for recognizing competent decision-making and respecting the

law. All these are values brought to us by Slovene Protestants.

We all need the Reformation spirit nowadays. When we look back into the past on ideals, the Reformation supporters are very close. Their message stayed written in our historical memory. Their contribution to our cultural and political growth cannot be wiped out and is still relevant. Their ethics are the ideal and inspiration for all of us, regardless of our religious beliefs or views. That's why it is only fair to honor them and show devotion to their tradition. It is right that Reformation Day is a day of serious consideration and serious effort to improve reality.

THE ROLE OF DIAKONIA IN SOCIETY—THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN PRACTICE

Eva Grollová

Outcomes of the global consultation on diakonia, Addis Ababa, October 2008.

The aims of the consultation were:

- to elaborate a comprehensive and sustained understanding of diakonia as a faith-based action of the church;
 - to strengthen the basis for diaconal praxis in the member churches, recognizing all resources and their specific roles as actors in civil society;
 - to obtain a shared understanding of diaconal challenges and to point to possibilities of joint action;
 - to provide materials for the planned LWF handbook on diakonia.
- seeks to uphold human dignity;
 - seeks to restore broken relationships and to promote healing and reconciliation in communities;
 - cares for the integrity of creation;
 - denounces injustice and advocates for peace and justice in line with its prophetic vocation;
 - provides services to people in need;
 - seeks transformation for everybody involved.

We agreed that the following elements are vital for our common understanding of diakonia:

Theologically diakonia:

- is based on grace and an expression of our Christian faith;
- is modeled on Christ's life and service;
- is an act of God through us to meet human beings who are suffering (physically, mentally, spiritually and socially) and in need, and in whose faces Christ is visible;
- seeks to reflect and witness God's unconditional love and care for creation;
- is embedded in the holistic mission of the church.

In its objectives, diakonia:

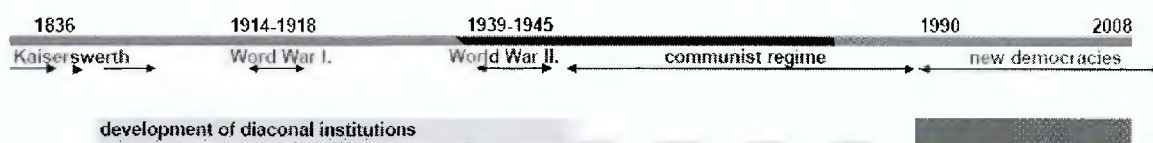


Having stated this, we nonetheless acknowledged difficulties in clearly defining the interrelationship between proclamation and diakonia. Both are expressions of the gospel and both are elements of the mission of the church. We committed ourselves to continue to work on this and to discern how this has to be applied in our many contexts.

If you want to read more about this consultation, the official message from the consultation and the draft of the handbook on diakonia are available. It is called *Diakonia in Context: Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment*.

The role of diakonia in the Central and Eastern European regions of LWF

Our region is quite large and it is composed of LWF member churches in 14 states. Those 14 states include 1.5 million church members.



History

It is important to mention some historical milestones which have influenced the development of diakonia in Eastern Europe.

Under communism, the state cut off the arms of the church, drastically restricting its work in many fields. Only in some states could the church continue some diaconal activities (Poland, East Germany, Hungary), but those services were strictly controlled. In Czechoslovakia and in the Soviet Union churches could not teach children or provide social or medical care. The church lost an important opportunity to be active in society.

In some places, diakonia as a service to its members within a congregation survived. But it was very problematic and even risky to visit patients in hospital. All activities of the ministers as well as of other members of the church were strictly controlled.

In some of our countries the word diakonia has disappeared from our vocabulary. I belong to that generation which could not have any personal experience with the social service of the church. Moreover, our generation had no chance to study subjects such as pedagogy, medicine, social work, etc. This was only possible for children of the politically active or at least loyal families. Christians were not considered reliable, and the fear that the state ideology could be shaken was permanently present. It is important to say that the church in many cases gradually became accustomed to this paralyzing situation. If you do not use your arm for some time, your muscles atrophy. And it is not easy to let them move again.

Political and economical situation

We are talking about a region with a variety of economical levels, state to state. Some of our states are already members of the European

Union and some are not. The economical levels vary a lot. This has, of course, a great influence on the kinds of social issues our societies need to solve. The priorities are different.

For example, while the issue of street children is critical in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia, it is not a priority in other regions. Discussions concerning the issues seniors face or about poverty take on completely different tone depending upon which state is being talked about.

It is also necessary to see that there are states which have recently been through a war, such as the states of the former Yugoslavia. It is obvious that the social issues faced by a society after such conflicts may have specific problems that need addressing, including broken families, social systems and neighbor relations, as well the difficult process of reconciliation.

What do we have in common in our region?

The church in our region is not strong. Lutherans are minority churches.

- The church is in the process of finding a new identity and role in society.
- Democracy in our countries is “young.”
- Diakonia is an important element in work being undertaken by civil society.

Risks

- With the development of new structures in society there are some risks.
- The developing social structures may be less flexible in their ability to react to acute needs.

- Rapidly developing institutions may take on lives of their own, which may be quite different from the church's direction.

Many services are dependent on state money. If there is no state money, there are no programs. Diakonia may be led only to do what the state wants.

How is diakonia understood?

By the church

It is not possible to present a statistically exact overview of how churches in Eastern Europe understand diakonia. Most of our churches do state that the care of those in need is an essential part of their ministry.

I am not sure if I am able to confirm that all our churches have the same understanding of the missionary role of diakonia. It may be that some churches do understand diakonia as an instrument of mission more strongly than others. The other churches distinguish the motivation for mission and diakonia.

By society

Diakonia is understood as a way for the church to provide social services. People do not care what we are doing on Sundays in our congregations but they do care whether we look after their mother or a severely handicapped child.

By us—people of diakonia

We are constantly asking ourselves: Is diaconal ministry the same as state social services? Is there any additional value in services which Christian organizations provide?

Who are the actors?

The main participants are congregations and diaconal institutions. I have already mentioned the minority situation of our churches. With the development of the diaconal institutions we can hardly find enough active members of our church or members of other churches to work with us. There is a strong demand for professionalism in

social service and its management. In several of our countries there are educational requirements for staff working in the social service field. Many of our employees are atheists. This is why we are quite concerned about the following questions:

- How can we protect and cultivate Christian values which we want to be present in our ministry?
- What is the difference between us and other nongovernmental organizations? What makes our service diaconal?
- Are we able to formulate and share what we believe with our colleagues?

Main challenges and tasks for diaconal action

One of the biggest challenges is how we manage the dichotomy or “schizophrenic position” of being both a professional organization fulfilling the state norms and part of the church? The answer is not easy. Many of us would be able to give you several examples of troubles or even struggles.

In my church, diakonia has a hierarchical structure which gives us bases to implement the elements of management. At the same time our centers have close links to the local churches. In this way our church supervises the work at all levels. The church gives basic directions for our work and supports our important decisions. But it is not always a practical process. Still, it is our intent to remain part of the church and to maintain good relations between local centers and local churches. We need this connection; otherwise we lose that most important link which the communion provides us, institutional diakonia.

Diakonia is the church in action operating also as a nongovernmental organization. Therefore it can be a bridge between church and society. Diakonia can be a bridge only if it is an open organism, ready to serve without ambition to make people members of a church.

Diakonia plays an important role in the development of civil society. Especially in places where people are used to waiting for the solutions given by the state, diakonia may motivate people to take

action, by being an advocate for those who cannot lift up their voices, such as children with mental handicaps and senior citizens.

The struggle for sustainability is one of the very important challenges in our region. Financial problems are common to all diaconal institutions. Without foreign assistance many services in Eastern Europe would never be launched. At the same time there is a great risk of services closing if the costs are covered by foreign donors alone.

Role of the LWF related to the diaconal work of the Lutheran Communion from the Eastern European perspective

It is well known in Eastern Europe that LWF is a leader when it comes to theological reflection on the diaconal dimension of the church. Diaconal institutions already take inspiration from LWF, and this affects the way they think about and do their work. Thus, LWF plays an important and even unique role in our region already.

We are searching for diaconal sensitivity in our churches. Cultivation of diakonia as a basic part of

the lifestyle of every church member must permeate programs for all generations starting with Sunday schools for children. Can LWF promote and enable sharing of good praxis in this respect?

We have older brothers and sisters who were able to teach, guide and protect us. Financial support and methods transferred from Western and Northern Europe were of great importance for our development, especially at the beginning of our activities. Now we are nearly able to stand on our own legs. Let our experience be used for others who might be on their journey just few steps behind us. Can LWF play the coordinating role in international exchange programs?

Living in a “diaconal diaspora” we desire to belong to the wider community. As a proof of this, I see that most of us are using the same logo—the cross and the crown.

Being part of a large community such as LWF may be a source of support for those who are struggling for their existence in their own state, as well as in their own church. Actions supporting this community building are more than welcome. This global consultation and the preparation of the handbook on diakonia are good steps in this direction.

LUTHERAN SPIRITUALITY AS A GIFT TO SOCIETY: CASE STUDY FROM NIGERIA

Peter Bartimawus

Introduction:

I express my gratitude to the planners for the opportunity and privilege to consider the issue of Lutheran spirituality in a context outside Christian Europe. The question of Lutheran spirituality is central to the issues we have been looking at during these past few days of this European consultation. My colleague from Taiwan and I hope to enhance this conversation as we journey together. We must continue to learn from each other to broaden our perspectives and horizons as a Christian family within the global context.

In order to help you understand the setting and the context from which I come, it is important to give you some basic background information about the Christian church in Nigeria.

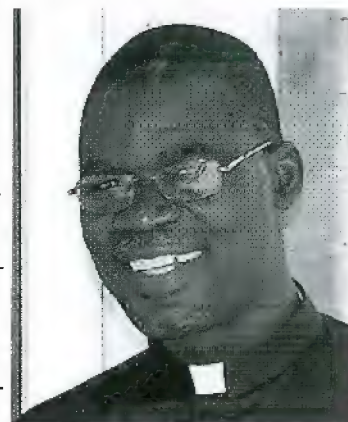
The Christian presence in Nigeria:

The spread of the gospel to Asia and Africa coincided with the colonial presence in those countries. In the 1800s the Berlin Conference set in motion the colonizing of Africa. This action was instigated by Britain, Germany and France. But while this was going on, Christian missionaries were also preparing to take the gospel to these areas. This combined interest led to what Ayandele calls the three Gs: gospel, gold and glory. He argues that the colonialists and the missionaries had a common interest in spreading the gospel, while seeking gold and glory for their respective nations. It was out of this broad framework that the missionary task of evangelization was undertaken.

But it must be understood that the “pagan” tribes of Africa, as they became known in mission history, were not *tabula rasa*. They had distinctive traditions and practices. In Nigeria, for example, Islam was

already well entrenched in the way of life of the people. Because of this, the colonial process met with a lot of resistance from Islamic leaders in northern Nigeria.

The British set up a system of “indirect rule.” This meant that the local population was administered by local people (in this case, the Islamic rulers), who had power given to them by the British. This process gave Islam and Islamic leaders, proximity to the seat of power, but also gave rise to Islamic legitimacy, which missionaries found difficult to deal with. It was this development that gave rise to the conflict between Islam and Christianity, especially in northern Nigeria. Thus, at the time of independence in 1960, Islam and Christianity were set to fight to reclaim lost ground. My presentation will illustrate this tension and show how Lutherans responded to some of these challenges.



Spheres of mission influence

Several Christian mission agencies worked in northern Nigeria: the Sudan United Mission (SUM), now Mission Afrika; the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM); and the Church Missionary Society (CMS). These three societies were each given territories with specific boundaries where their mission activity was to be carried out. The aim was to avoid unhealthy competition that would antagonize some of the Muslim rulers who collaborated with the British rulers. The Lutheran mission, which was part of this broad network, was assigned a place in what is now Adamawa and in parts of Taraba State to carry out its mission activity.

Based on this policy, northern Nigeria was divided into three distinct zones. Zone I, pagan areas; Zone II, mixed population; Zone III, Islamic area. No evangelism was to be carried out in Zones II and III. Evangelism was to be carried out in the pagan areas only. Despite this clear policy, we will observe what really took place.

The impact of colonialism on the church in Africa

Despite the good work done by missionaries in Africa and other places, certain concerns need to be addressed. Some of these issues are strongly embedded in the socio-political life of these countries. In places such as northern Nigeria these include:

- The legitimacy of Islamic institutions.
- The individualistic nature of salvation.
- The dichotomy between the secular and the sacred.
- The inactivity of the churches in the political and socio-economic issues of the society.
- The lack of proactive interventions by Christians in all sectors of society.

It is against this background that I will proceed to examine what I consider the contribution of Lutheran spirituality to society within the context of northern Nigeria.

The Attack on Religious Freedom and Lutheran Resilience

Andrawus Njoboliyo was an itinerate evangelist with the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN). As an itinerate evangelist, he would travel from city to city, conducting open air services where he preached. In 1954, he was arrested for preaching and was fined £25. He appealed against the judgment but the judge opposed the appeal.

By the late 1950s, almost all the churches were under the missionaries' control. The missionaries did not wish to be involved in this case. They argued that they wanted to let the Nigerians learn how to manage their own problems. The national leaders raised funds and mobilized support to engage a Christian lawyer when the case was to be heard at the appeal court. The court ruled in favor of the church.

This victory helped the church to experience some peace of mind for quite some time.

But the question remains: why did the missionaries opt to remain onlookers when the freedom of the Christians with whom they worked was threatened? Was it really a desire to give Nigerians an opportunity to manage their own affairs? Or did they fail to act out of fear?

Chapel at Government House Yola

Rev. Wilson Sabiya, who challenged the lack of a chapel at the government house, was a Pastor of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN). He was the Chairman of the Christian Association in Nigeria (CAN), Yola branch. He was arrested and locked up by the governor for challenging the government's refusal to build a chapel at the government house. The case was taken to court, where the judge ruled in favor of the Christians. This angered the governor, and although the Christians won the case, the government has refused to build the chapel.

The following observations will help our discussion:

- In northern Nigeria, mosques are very common in public places and they are often built with public funds. This is not the case for Christian places of worship.
- This is a question of justice: Why should one faith receive public funds, while another is denied?
- Standing up for justice has in most cases been very costly.

Christian and Muslim relations:

In North America, the 11 September 2001 attacks on the United States were a defining moment in the relationship between Muslims and Christians. This event has affected actual encounters as well as American policy towards Muslims and what we generally refer to as terrorist activities.

In a similar way (despite the long presence of Islam in northern Nigeria), the late 1980s have been a critical period for Christians there during which they experienced Muslims in a new way. Several religious crises between Muslims and Christians led many to question the continuing coexistence between the two faith communities. But it was out of this crisis-ridden situation that, with support from overseas partners, former Archbishop David Windibiziri set out to establish a Christian–Muslim dialogue to address the situation. The forum brought together Christians and Muslims to seek to find ways in which to coexist.

Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN)

The old paradigm in which mutual fellowship and partnership between mission societies had been difficult is giving way to new forums. New ecumenical partnerships are being formed along different denominational lines. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Lutheran Church are providing excellent leadership in fostering these fellowships in those places where they are dominant. Similarly, the struggle against HIV and AIDS is a real and very practical challenge,

not just to the church in Africa, but for the world. To deal with this scourge Lutherans are offering people hope by networking with others.

These few examples illustrate how Lutherans have made a distinctive contribution to church and society. Yet there are more areas where we need to make a positive impact on society.

Challenges and obstacles

Despite these changes, it must be admitted that old habits die hard. There is room for improvement:

- The tension implied in the two kingdom theory is a serious threat to active political involvement.
- The tension between the private and public roles of religion continues to grow in some circles.
- We need a reappraisal of Martin Luther's relevance for the African context.

Questions for further discussion

- In what ways has mission Christianity affected Africa?
- What can we learn from this?

While the African context continues to change, what are the constant values we should strive to keep?

TWENTY-TWO YEARS AFTER THE LIFTING OF MARTIAL LAW— A LUTHERAN REFLECTION ON CHANGES IN TAIWANESE SOCIETY

Thomas Yu



I feel privileged to be invited to participate in this consultation. As an Asian, I wondered what contribution I could make to this European consultation on issues related to church and state. The topic of this panel, “Lutheran Spirituality as a Gift to Society,” is rather appeal-

ing. I decided to focus my brief presentation on the topic “Twenty-two Years After the Lifting of Martial Law—A Lutheran Reflection on Changes in Taiwanese Society.” I will not be able to cover all of Asia. However, many of my observations and reflections are related to the looming influence of China on Taiwan.

Linguistically, the word “China”, i.e., “Zhongguo,” literally means “The Central Kingdom.” This implies that China is situated at the center of world power and glory. Taiwan, on the other hand, though it was hailed as “Formosa” or the “beautiful island” by Dutch sailors in the early 17th century, was ignored by Chinese rulers despite its riches. Taiwan was made a province of China in 1885. When the Ching dynasty was defeated during the Sino-Japanese War in 1895, Taiwan was ceded to Japan in perpetuity. Ching envoy Li Hong-zhang, in an attempt to assuage Empress Dowager Cixi, said at the time of the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki,

**“Birds do not sing and
flowers are not fragrant
on the island of Taiwan.”**

After the end of the Second World War there were two declarations concerning the legal status of Taiwan, the 1943 Cairo Proclamation and the Potsdam Proclamation of 1945. These were statements of intention expressed by the military missions of the Allied powers rather than declarations by heads of governments. When Japan surrendered in 1945, General Douglas MacArthur authorized Chiang Kai-shek’s military representative to accept the surrender of Taiwan from the Japanese and to temporarily undertake the military occupation of the island on behalf of the Allied powers. The Treaty of San Francisco and the peace treaty between Japan and Taiwan are international agreements that should take precedent over declarations. These treaties did not specify that the Republic of China (ROC) or the People’s Republic of China (PRC) would be the beneficiary of Taiwan and its associated islands. This means that the occupation of enemy territory cannot be equated with sovereignty over that territory. Therefore, it is clear that the status of Taiwan is *de jure* undetermined.

The Japanese were expelled from Taiwan in 1946. In 1947 a major rebellion broke out against the rule of the nationalist authorities. On 28 February of that year Chiang Kai-shek sent in his troops and conducted a bloody repression. As a result, tens of thousands of civilians in Taiwan were executed. The following year martial law was imposed. Freedom of speech, the rights to assemble, parade and form

new political parties, which had been guaranteed by the constitution, were prohibited.

When the ROC Constitution was accepted in 1912, Taiwan was a Japanese colony. However, when the nationalist government lost China, the constitution they retained continued to claim sovereignty over the territory of the old China. The irony is that the nationalists, though they no longer governed China, continued to use the outdated constitution to rule over Taiwan. Taiwan needs a new constitution, and a new country to be formed by the will of the entire population of Taiwan. Unfortunately, such an aspiration has been ruthlessly crushed by the ruling authorities and discouraged by international realities.

The end of Martial Law

Because the legitimacy of nationalist rule was being increasingly questioned and the cry for constitutional guarantees of human rights and democracy were mounting, martial law was finally lifted in 1987 after 38 years. In 1996 Taiwan's first direct presidential election was held. This was a monumental achievement in the long development of Chinese political history. Since then, Taiwan has entered into a new era of democracy, and people there are able to enjoy for the first time their constitutionally protected rights. In 2000 the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) candidate Chen Shui-bien was elected president of the Republic of China, ending the more than 50-year reign of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT). This marked the first shift of power among political parties.

The basic difference between the KMT and the DPP is that the KMT favors the unification with China, whereas the DPP seeks the independence of Taiwan. The KMT's stand on unification is based on the anti-communism of Chiang Kai-shek and his son Chiang Ching-kuo, which sought to regain control over China. The DPP's goal is to achieve the independence of Taiwan. However, this is vehemently opposed by the PRC. China claims that Taiwan is an integral part of China, even though it has never ruled the island during the past half century, and China has repeatedly been thwarted by the United States

in this claim. Despite being put in this political strait jacket, Taiwan has managed to develop its economy and has emerged as a sizable economic power. It is economically active and strong, but diplomatically isolated and even choked by the PRC. The PRC has more than 1,400 missiles aimed at Taiwan, and has fired test missiles in waters close to major ports in northeastern and southwestern Taiwan to dissuade voters from supporting presidential candidates who espouse the independence of Taiwan or the separation of China and Taiwan. China's policy toward Taiwan is two-pronged: choke off Taiwan's diplomatic breathing space, while sucking it dry of its rich financial services and advanced technology.

Struggling with democracy

For the 22 precious years of its budding development, Taiwan did not have a good environment for building a foundation for democracy. There are two major factors that disrupted the growth: the interest and interference of the super powers; and the lack of the preparation for transitional justice. On the latter point, I will raise some important issues:

The DPP's close victory in the 2000 presidential election came unexpectedly and was mainly due to a split within the KMT. When former president, Chen Sui-bien, took over as president, the DPP did not have the civil machinery to launch reform or consolidate needed changes.

The DPP had no other choice but to rely on the constitution inherited from the KMT. This means the party had to live with outdated ideology and work within hostile military, educational, diplomatic, judicial and police systems, as well as with media that were resistant to the DPP's vision of independence and self-determination.

The DPP took charge of the administration, but the opposition KMT party possessed a clear majority in the Legislative Yuan (Parliament). This severely handicapped the new government in passing budgets and implementing major policies. Consequently, the KMT opposed almost everything the DPP proposed, even if the measures were detrimental to the national defense or the livelihood of the people.

No effort has been made to vindicate the thousands who lost their lives in the 38 years of white terror following the 28 February 1947 atrocity. No law has been passed to prosecute the perpetrators, and no adequate state compensation has been provided to the victims. Worst of all, the KMT is unwilling to let the full truth be known. In addition, the garrison headquarters destroyed crucial documents that could indict the ones who were responsible for executing these criminal acts.

During the period of martial law the KMT confiscated innumerable lands and properties surrendered by the Japanese as party assets. Many of these seizures were legalized secretly and as a result the KMT is the richest political party in the democratic world. While the DPP was struggling to fight election campaigns with meager resources, the KMT was easily able to finance its candidates with a huge amount of support.

The KMT has firm control over a wide range of media. During election campaigns it has been able to spend an incredible amount to buy media time and advertisements. The party is skillful in masterminding the media and in forming damaging stereotypes of their opponents in the public's mind.

The KMT is able to mobilize the media and intellectuals to attack particular targets so that voters will only pay attention to the "corruption" of the present leadership and think that if the corrupted regime is removed, people will have hope for the future.

In the 2008 legislative and presidential elections the KMT won three quarters of the legislative seats and Ma Ying-jeou was elected the new president of the ROC for a four-year term. The DPP received only one quarter of the legislative seats, which deprives it of the power to propose bills. Since the KMT possesses a majority in the legislature, the DPP representatives have no power to effectively check the budgets and bills proposed by President Ma's administration. In addition to this administrative and legislative superiority, President Ma recently sought to become the KMT's party chief. It is no wonder that his critics argue he wants to become an "emperor" in Taiwan.

During the presidential campaign, Ma proposed a so-called 6-3-3 promise, i.e., before the

end of his first term, there was to be six percent annual economic growth, USD 30,000 per capita income and an unemployment rate lower than three percent. Unfortunately, within just one year of his rising to the presidency, the economic growth for 2009 was forecast to be -4.25 percent, the unemployment rate rose to nearly six percent, and the gap between rich and poor in Taiwan grew to 62 times its former level. The cost of daily necessities is rising significantly. As an increasing number of people are jobless, they find their basic needs are not being met.

After President Ma was sworn into office, the most important and crucial development of his leadership, perhaps "rulership" is more accurate, is his intention to form a "One China Market." For him, this is the only way to break away from "the closed-country policy" and the only hope to keep Taiwan's economy alive in the face of mounting challenges. Before the election, Ma pledged that he would always make "Taiwan the top priority" and the people's well-being, his "first concern." He even declared, "The destiny of Taiwan should be decided by the 23 million people." A year has passed. When it comes time to examine Ma's actual performance, people will begin to doubt Ma's success. Here are some examples:

In order to ally itself with the PRC, Ma put all Taiwan's eggs into the One China basket. In order to seek a truce with China, he does not hesitate to make concessions concerning Taiwan's sovereignty, which is in no way negotiable, unless it is the free choice of Taiwan's 23 million people.

Ma's administration's top priority is expanding Taiwan's investments in China, a strategy that jeopardizes national security and the well-being of local farmers, manufacturers and domestic workers.

The alliance between nationalist authorities and the PRC aims to gradually pave the way eventual unification. It constitutes a united front to sabotage the DPP's credibility and debilitate its influence. After eight years of being in opposition, the ruling nationalists are now doing everything they can to consolidate their hold on power. Their concern is not to build a true and lasting democracy that is characterized by a two-party structure with checks and balances. Their

ideology and mentality is to rule, rather than to lead and serve with accountability.

There is ample evidence that political forces are interfering with the judiciary system in Taiwan. The judiciary has become an instrument that serves the ruling power's interest rather than the fundamental human rights of the people.

I have tried to describe as succinctly as I can the changes that have taken place in Taiwanese society in the past 22 years since the lifting of martial law. I admit that to engage in a Lutheran reflection upon these unsettling major changes is not an easy job. Even so, I will venture to evaluate as briefly as possible with the following points.

Christian perspective on society

Church and state issues are not up for serious debate in Taiwan. Taiwan is a religiously pluralistic society, where Christianity is a small minority. Though there are few of us, we Christians have a distinct perspective on society and its prospects. As Martin Luther stated in the Small Catechism, society is a created order which is accountable to the Creator. Society exists for its constituency and their well-being.

Though we are children of the heavenly God, we are also citizens of a particular nation. Is Taiwan a nation? This is a bewildering, sensitive and painful issue for everyone who is connected to the

island, its history, culture and all of its life experiences. Taiwan has been an international orphan. It has been repeatedly ruled and exploited by alien powers. In the past we have been kidnapped to be anti-Communist. Now, due to the shift in ruling parties, we are once again being coerced to be united with the emerging economic giant, the ruthlessly authoritarian China.

What should we do at this juncture of Taiwan history? Shall we remain pessimistic? Should we give in to the hard and harsh reality? Or do we pray to the Lord of history, rely solely on God's grace and guidance, be on guard for the people of Taiwan and watch the authorities as they make decisions that affect and the wellbeing of Taiwan?

We need to educate the people regarding the sacredness of voting, inform the public about the necessity of transitional justice, and demand a judicial system that offers justice without favoritism or partiality.

We are called to bear the cross of testifying the gospel of Jesus Christ, as well as the cross of building up a just society in which human rights are adequately protected and people's well-being nurtured.

Finally, against all odds and setbacks, faith and trust in the God of faithfulness and of all-sufficient grace is most essential. Without God, all human goodwill and efforts would be in vain. However, with God and God's mercy, goodness and justice can still be advanced, even in the face of human selfishness and distortions.



OPENING WORSHIP

Deputy Bishop Marianna Szabóné Mátrai

Mark 6:30-34

³⁰The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all they had done and taught. ³¹He said to them, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. ³²And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. ³³Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. ³⁴As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ!

I could always well understand those people whose long-felt need resulted in the birth of the legends of Jesus or the infancy stories of the apocryphal gospels. We know that the gospels are goal oriented and rather than being biographies of Jesus depict the story of our salvation. We know that they tell what is indispensable for the Christian faith. We know that the evangelists are not novel writers. Still, it would be nice to learn something about the everyday Jesus, maybe small, seemingly unimportant events from his life, tiny features, a few habits, something of the way he expressed himself.

This wish remains unfulfilled, we know. That makes—for curious people like me—the few gospel stories with everyday details about the person of Jesus, or fragmentary report about the life of Jesus and the disciples that much more special and valuable. These tiny fragments are truly telling and they put these truly important stories into a remarkable context.

Among these the above text from the Gospel of Mark is truly a gem.

Jesus calls tired disciples to take a rest

“Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” The sentence is really a calling. In our minds we are there at the original scene, somewhere along the shores of Lake Gennesaret. After a tiring day, that may have started at dawn in a completely different part of Europe. The day continues with the arrival at a strange place, in a never before seen room at a university. Then the day continues with a lecture, and finally comes the evening. What an unusual Jesus voice: come with me and get some rest.

I am completely convinced that this is why we enter the church from time to time; that is why a daily devotion is part of a theological conference. That is why the conference starts with worship. We need the everyday word of Jesus: come with me and take a rest for a while. This rest Jesus is calling for is to give his disciples the means for developing a new perspective. For us, there will perhaps be a breaking away from our closed existence that so often provides only one way of seeing or one way of forming an opinion. It breaks us away from our own world that so often makes us slaves. It provides new aspects, broadens the horizon and teaches us to see things differently. The rest Jesus calls his disciples to take provides true regeneration. Thanks to it we may together see things in a new way.

A half sentence from the story is enough to tell how much the disciples of Jesus needed this kind of regeneration. They needed the kind of relaxation that lifts us from our closed world. We read in the story that the disciples had so much work to do with the people gathering around Jesus that they had no time at all to eat. “I don’t have time to eat,” we say in a day full of rushing, and how often it turns out to be literally true.

Hungarian university students and young people working in the city don’t take lunch as we used to.

They buy a few pastries at the baker's in the street. They purchase a sandwich at a take-away restaurant and eat it as they rush back to the office or to the university. They have to hurry. There is no time left to eat. And later on come the physical and mental damages that this kind of lifestyle brings. Medical diagnosis five to ten years later shows an inability to develop healthy, harmonious relationships and troubled and distracted personalities. How easily one becomes driven by this whirlwind: I run, I rush, I want to take everything and no cost is too high to achieve it. There is no time at all to eat.

We here in Eastern Europe feel that we need to run more, we need to worry more

We think we need to skip eating more often than in the northern or western parts of our continent. It's a riddle why everything takes more energy and worries here. We are so often tired and in despair. We have no time to eat. We do not believe that it is crazy to push ourselves excessively. We will lose ourselves by the time we reach the goals we are reaching for so desperately. We here in Eastern Europe understand the words of Jesus so well: you, who are hastened, who had no time to eat, come with me and take a little rest.

The story continues like a film. New Testament scholars say that it was designed to be like a movie, by Mark himself. In reality it could hardly happen like this. The gospel says that Jesus and his disciples embarked on a boat to go to an uninhabited place to find some rest. But alas, people on the shore noticed this. They followed Jesus and the disciples, running along the shore. And they arrived at the place of rest earlier than the boat. By the time those seeking rest got out of the boat, a massive crowd had gathered on the shore. More and more people had joined them from the neighboring towns and villages.

The scene is shocking and disturbing. It was a noisy, smelly, raunchy miserable, wretched, hopeless flock without a shepherd. If we imagine that Lake Genesaret is here in Budapest, the scene reminds me of the younger generation. At first sight they are definitely not miserable, wretched or pitiable. They are strong and sure footed. We taught them how to fight.

What they learned from school is that they need to be first, they need to win against their peers and see them as adversaries. If needed, the fight must be hard and harsh. They have brought along with

them a sense of honor toward the post-socialist idol: money. This is what one must strive for, no matter what the cost. If you need to, you work against others. If you need to, you exploit yourself, leaving no time to eat. Reach the top and become rich because your parents had no chance to achieve it in a given historical time. This is what we taught them.

We did not pass on our values like friendship, the need for fellowship, embracing each other and mercy. A pastor friend of mine laments that it is immensely difficult to invite young people for congregational events. They don't want to come to camps, for outings, they don't want to talk. Why? During the weekends, they just sit beside their computers.

If we try to see with the eyes of Jesus

We see these young people as a generation that needs orientation and leadership, then we realize how much we should do. In Hungarian schools there is no compulsory religious education or teaching of ethics. Only those who are already members of a church attend religious education classes. I suppose the Hungarian Christians don't do all they might to change this situation, such as demonstrating to the younger generation that there are goals and values besides money and violence. Christian faith abounds in values that the younger generation is missing out on. I am convinced that we greatly need the invitation of Jesus today so that we might get a new perspective, see new tasks and take on new missions that are relevant for the coming generations too.

In Mark's gospel, we see that Jesus feels compassion for those who have gathered at what was to be a place of rest. He starts to teach and then he feeds the crowd of 5,000.

It is a joy and very promising that we start the conference this way: Jesus calls us to rest, he teaches and he gives us bread to eat. By drawing from this story we may see with new eyes the crowd gathering on the shores of Lake Genesaret. This can give us new strength to offer the bread of Jesus to those who—together with us—are hungry for regeneration, new perspectives, physical and spiritual bread.

Amen.



SUNDAY WORSHIP

Bishop Dr Tamás Fabiny

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Lk 19:10)

Dear sisters and brothers in Jesus Christ!

If we are selecting the greatest chapters of the Bible, Luke 15—among others—would have a privileged place, both for superficial readers of the Bible, because of its simple beauty, and for scholars, because of its clear theology.

Luke 15:1-2, today’s reading from the *Daily Watchwords*, says: “Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, ‘This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.’”

We can see that Jesus receives sinners. This is an unwashed crowd, unwashed in a ceremonial sense and unwashed physically as well. He establishes a table fellowship with them. Although eating together with them is a sin according to the Mosaic law, Jesus accepts them as his community. In the Gospel of Luke we find Jesus’ three parables about the lost sheep, the lost coin and lost men.

These parables are told to the Pharisees, that is, to religious people.

The lost sheep

This is the simplest of all the parables. It is about a lost sheep and a seeking shepherd. The story is set in the wilderness.

All uncultivated ground was called wilderness or desert at that time.

In Judea it was tragically easy for a sheep to go astray. There were narrow paths on the top of the hills. Sheep were menaced by different sorts of

danger. Wild animals such as wolves and robbers could grab and take them any time.

However, Palestinian shepherds were experts in tracking down their sheep; they could follow the track of a lost sheep for miles and bring it back to the fold.

Domesticated sheep were kept in communal flocks. The flock belonged not to an individual, but to a village. There were often two or three shepherds with them. That’s why the shepherd could leave the 99 to follow the lost sheep.

It was a rule that if a sheep could not be brought back alive, its bones were to be brought back to prove that it was dead and to show how it had died.

We can imagine how shepherds returned to the village without one of their fellow shepherds and one of the sheep from the flock at evening time, and how they would explain that this one shepherd was still on the mountainside.

And we can imagine how the eyes of people in the village would constantly watch the hillside, awaiting the shepherd who had not yet come home.

And we can imagine the shouts of joy when they saw him coming down the pathway to the village with the sheep across his shoulders, safe and sound. We can imagine how the village would welcome him, gathering in gladness to hear the story of how the sheep that was lost had been found.

This is very realistic! It is easy to follow and understand.

Dear sisters and brothers, dear friends!

We are eager to hear your stories.

I am sure you can tell several stories—in connection with the topic of your consultation—about how your sheep have been lost.

You can tell realistic and tragic stories about the dangerous places your sheep have been for decades or where they still are:

- in the desert
- on narrow pathways
- in the midst of wolves and robbers
- in danger all the time.

I am sure these stories are real and moving. Many of us in Hungary can tell our own similar stories, which can be real and moving as well.

But let me encourage you to speak not only about the losses you have had to face, but also—or even more so—

About the ways the shepherd has found the lost sheep

Let us hear the stories of the sheep that are alive. They can be the witnesses of God's seeking and caring love.

Let me challenge you to change these stories to stories of the "found sheep"!

Are you ready to speak about the miracles, how the shepherd found and saved the sheep?

Are you ready to witness about the love of God?

According to this parable, love is:

Individual: In God's Kingdom 1 is the highest figure. The "one", the individual is important. The shepherd cannot rest with the 99, without that *one*. We can hear about bus accidents in the media: "only one died". But for a family it is 100 percent. You know that it does not matter how large a family a parent has, he or she cannot spare even one child.

Patient: Sheep are the proverbial foolish creatures. A sheep has no one but itself to blame for the dangerous situation. God does not blame us, but God feels sorrow. We have to be patient with our people. When they are in trouble, we must not say, "It is your own fault!"

Seeking: The shepherd did not wait, hoping the sheep might come back. He went to search for it. The shepherd even risks his own life, just as Jesus, the Good Shepherd, did! God does not wait for

people. God goes and finds them. "I have found Jesus?" No, "Jesus has found me!"

Rejoicing: Here, there is nothing but joy. We, in a similar situation, would:

- give moral lectures;
- ask for a promise not to do that again;
- never forget one's past, and be prepared to remember one's sins again.

But God puts our sins aside and when we are with God, it is all joy. Is that joy present in our Christian life?

Protecting: This love seeks and saves. God's love does not end in finding us, but it offers us a new future as well. This love makes:

- the foolish wise;
- the weak strong;
- the sinner pure.

Finally, I have mentioned that we have to tell stories to each other

We have to do that, and not only stories about the lost sheep, but more accounts about the seeking shepherds.

Let me tell you one story about a man, who—with his heritage—plays a very important role in our present church life, and who is a key figure in our church and society.

On one of the walls of this very church you will see a little relief, portraying a Lutheran pastor, Gábor Sztehlo.

He was born 100 years ago.

- In the 1930s he attended people's high school. This kind of school was meant for peasant youth in villages, in the time of the economic crisis.
- In 1944 he saved several hundred Jewish children, risking his own life.

-
- In late 1940s and early 1950s, in the time of the deportation by Communists, he assisted those who had to leave their homes, or collected children whose parents were in jail. He organized Gaudiopolis,” the city of joy for these children.
 - Later he served among physically and mentally handicapped children. Sztehló organized the diaconal work of our church.

He carried out his mission time after time under different circumstances, but acting always ac-

ording to the biblical word, portraying Jesus: “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” (Lk 19:10)

Although Sztehló was a Lutheran pastor, he was a very secular person, in the best meaning of the word. His life and his mission of seeking out and protecting the vulnerable were carried out in the midst of this secular world.

Sztehló’s story is just like Jesus’ parable, which tells us a secular story about a lost sheep and the shepherd who wants to find it.

Amen.

CHURCH AND STATE IN SOCIETIES IN TRANSFORMATION IN EUROPE

Message from a LWF consultation held in Budapest, 26—29 June 2009

From 26–29 June, 2009, representatives from many of the Lutheran churches in Europe and a few from other parts of the world came together at the Evangelical Lutheran Theological University in Budapest, where we were graciously hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary, to participate in a consultation on the relationships between church and state in Europe that have emerged since 1989. As the culmination of a process begun in 2006, this consultation was organized by the Europe Desk of the Department for Mission and Development of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF/DMD). Prior workshops were held in Moravske Toplice (Slovenia), Svätý Jur (Slovakia), St. Petersburg (Russia) and Leeds (England).

This consultation took place at a time when Europeans from both sides of the former Iron Curtain were celebrating the pivotal developments in 1989 when the Hungarian border with Austria was opened, and people were free to escape from oppressive, totalitarian regimes. Conscious of this historic event, participants reflected on the hopes and fears of the intervening 20 years and the successes and failures. We are aware that some matters from that time still remain to be reconciled. The consultation also took place in the year of the 25th anniversary of the 1984 LWF Assembly in Budapest; this served as a reminder of the political, economic and religious situation existing in Central and Eastern Europe at that time.

The churches that had previously been divided by the Iron Curtain have had the opportunity since then to get to know each other in ways previously unforeseen. Twenty years ago, it might have been difficult for them to recognize each

other as churches, or even to have a shared language through which to communicate, but now they have been able to discover that, in spite of significant differences which still exist between East and West, there are many things, both positive and negative, that they share. For example, there are new patterns of state “neutrality” toward churches. Some states provide not only financial support, but also expect churches to do more in their societies. Churches struggle to bear witness to the faith they confess in new political and economic contexts, and amid increasingly diverse populations. The numbers of church members may have declined, but in many cases the interest in spirituality and values in their societies has increased. It has become apparent that there are diverse ways of being Lutheran churches in Europe, not to mention the rest of the world.

Prior to 1989, churches in Central and Eastern Europe had often provided the space in which discussion could take place in tyrannical states, and fears and aspirations articulated. Since then, spiritual values have been under threat from different “tyrannies”—of consumerism and neo-liberal globalization—but also in part because the churches themselves have been in danger of diluting or abandoning the substance of the message they are called to proclaim and live out. Lutheran Christians in the emerging Europe have to find new ways and spaces for constructive discussion and dialogue on critical questions they face. While churches may not always be able to arrive at clear answers, the very process of struggling together with the questions can be a helpful contribution in society.

Although there have been movements to harmonize differences between European nations, particularly in the European Union, Europe remains a community of nations with diverse histories, cultures, achievements and challenges. We shared examples from our own concrete realities and grew

in our appreciation of this diversity as well as our awareness that we face many of the same challenges, although in different forms. We also share in the same God-given gifts and resources for dealing with these challenges. As Lutherans we have a theological base which enables us to wrestle positively with the challenges facing us, even though the outcomes or conclusions may vary.

Some of the challenges include:

- Increased freedom of religion: people now face a religious marketplace of competing churches and faiths, some of which have fundamentally different approaches to the relationship of church and state. How will we as Lutheran churches respond to this?
- Even in minority situations, Lutheran churches need to remember that they have the responsibility to speak out in society.
- How we can be faithful churches with positive political stances in increasingly secular societies where the voice of the churches appears to be marginalized?
- How can churches, in collaboration with others, further human rights and counter discrimination in increasingly complex contexts, especially in situations of exploitation that compromise human dignity?
- How can potential challenges be identified before they become disasters?
- How can churches speak and act more proactively in the new spaces that are being created in our societies, as well as more dialogue in our congregations regarding these stances and actions?
- How can the fears and resistance in our societies toward immigrants be overcome, so that they might become fuller participants in the shaping of European societies?

- What can we learn from the new perspectives and vitality that people from other parts of the world are bringing into our churches?
- How can we communicate theological understanding in ways that will more effectively engage and speak to people in our societies?
- Churches need to more alert to the repercussions that their words and actions may have in other parts of the world.
- Where appropriate, ecumenical cooperation (including through the Conference of European Churches) for improving church/state relations must be pursued.

Glimpsing God's signs of hope:

God has upheld the churches in many of our countries through painful times of oppression, persecution and declining numbers and influence, and continues to do so today. God's Spirit is at work in communities of faith that in many cases are far different from what they were in the past, doing new things, through new people who are bringing new signs of life to churches that have seemed to be dying out. God continues to be active throughout Europe, not only in and through the churches, but also in the wider societies. This is occurring through new opportunities for diaconal work and participation in civil society.

As Lutherans we especially discern God's presence through a theology of the cross: God is glimpsed not through visible strength and power, but through weakness and vulnerability. Here we need to learn from and reach out to immigrants from other parts of Europe and beyond, to hear their voices, perspectives and the yearnings they bring—if the good news is to be communicated and lived out in ways that are credible and transforming in the life of the people in Europe and around the world today.

Conclusion:

We recommend to LWF member churches that their national committees, church leaders, officers,

congregations and other church meetings and networks reflect on and discuss these issues, using appropriate technologies, resources and means of communication (including those of the LWF) to:

- continue discussion of these matters
- initiate actions among all sectors of the church
- enhance the witness of the churches in the public sphere

- share outcomes with others in the global Lutheran Communion.

We further recommend the churches to support joint efforts toward the European inter-governmental and ecumenical organizations, and to bring this message to the attention of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) in their work with the European institutions.

CONTRIBUTORS

Rev. Per-Kristian Aschim, Church of Norway, **per.kristian.aschim@kirken.no**
Rev. Dr Peter Bartimawus, Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria, **pbartimawus001@luthersem.edu**
Bishop Dr Tamás Fabiny, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary, **tamas.fabiny@lutheran.hu**
Prof. Dr Tibor Fabiny, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary, **tibor.fabiny@lutheran.hu**
Ms. Eva Grollová, Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, **grollova@diakonieccc.cz**
Mr. Alain Hazoumé, Evangelical Lutheran Church of France, **alain.hazoume@free.fr**
Rev. Dr Dieter Heidtmann, Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE), **csc@cec-kek.be**
Rev. Dieter Kampen, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Italy, **kampen@chiesaluterana.it**
Rev. Dr Annette Leis-Peters, Church of Sweden, **annette.leis@crs.uu.se**
Rev. Dr Roy Long, Lutheran Church in Great Britain
Director Rüdiger Noll,*Conference of European Churches, **csc@cec-kek.be**
Prof. Dr Gerhard Robbers, Institute for European Institutional Law, Trier/Germany
robbers@uni-trier.de
Dr Gábor Orosz, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary, **gabor.orosz@lutheran.hu**
Dr. Ingwill Thorson Plesner,*Church of Norway, **i.t.plesner@nchr.uio.no**
Rev. Linards Rozentals, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, **linards.rozentals@luteradraudze.lv**
Mr. Enoh Seba, Faculty of Theology “M. F. Illyricus,” Croatia, **enoh.seba@tfmvi.hr**
Rev. Simon Sever, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Slovenia, **eco.bodonci@siol.net**
Dr Marianne Subklew, North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church, **subklew@haus-am-schueberg.de**
Deputy Bishop Marianna Szabóné Mátrai, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary,
mariann.matrai@lutheran.hu
Rev. Dr Eva-S. Vogel-Mfato, Lutheran World Federation Europe Desk, **evm@lutheranworld.org**
Rev. Dr Thomas Yu, Taiwan Lutheran Church, **thomasy@cls.org.tw**

*Contribution is available online at: www.lutheranworld.org

Links to press communication from the consultation by Dr Stephen Brown, Ecumenical News International (ENI), **SGB@eni.ch**

PARTICIPANTS LIST

	Title	First_Name	Last_Name	Country	Organisation
1	Rev. Dr.	Dieter	HEIDTMANN	Belgium	Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)
2	Rev.	Rüdiger	NOLL	Belgium	Director, Church & Society Commission of CEC, Brussels
3	Mr.	Enoh	SEBA	Croatia	Faculty of Theology "Matthias Flacius Illyricus", Zagreb, Croatia
4	Ms.	Eva	GROLLOVÁ	Czech Republic	Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren
5	Dr.	Pekka	LEINO	Finland	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
6	Rev.	Anne-Sophie	GUERRIER HAHN	France	Protestant Church of the AC of Alsace and Lorraine
7	Mr.	Alain T.	HAZOUME	France	Evangelical Lutheran Church of France
8	Prof. Dr.	Gerhard	ROBBERS	Germany	Institute for European Institutional Law, University Trier, Germany
9	Rev. Dr.	Marianne	SUBKLEW	Germany	North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church
10	Prof. Dr.	Tibor	FABINY	Hungary	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary
11	Bishop em. Dr	Béla	HARMATI	Hungary	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary
12	Rev.	Henriett	LENGYEL-CAIRNS	Hungary	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary
13	Dr.	Gábor	OROSZ	Hungary	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary
14	Ms.	Gabriella	SZABÓ PAPP	Hungary	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary
15	Dr.	Klara	TARR CSELOVSZY	Hungary	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary
16	Dr.	Virgil	LÁSZLÓ	Hungary	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary
17	Rev.	Dieter	KAMPEN	Italy	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Italy
18	Rev.	Linards	ROZENTALS	Latvia	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia
19	Rev. Dr.	Peter	BARTIMAWUS	Nigeria	Bronnum Lutheran Seminary, Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria
20	Rev.	Per Kristian	ASCHIM *	Norway	Church of Norway *could not attend
21	Dr.	Ingvill Thorson	PLESNER	Norway	Church of Norway
22	Mr.	Lars	SKRAMSTAD	Norway	Accompanying Person
23	Ms.	Ewa	SLIWKA	Poland	Evangelical Church AC in Poland
24	Archbishop Dr.	Edmund W.H.	RATZ	Russian Federation	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia & Other States
25	Rev.	Sergey	TATARENKO	Russian Federation	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia

26	Dr.	Lenka	RUZEKOVÁ	Slovakia	Evangelical Church AC in the Slovak Republic
27	Rev.	Simon	SEVER	Slovenia	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Slovenia
28	Rev. Dr.	Annette	LEIS-PETERS	Sweden	Church of Sweden
35	Rev. Dr.	Thomas	YU	Taiwan	China Lutheran Seminary, Taiwan Lutheran Church
36	Rev. Dr.	Roy	LONG	United Kingdom	Lutheran Church in Great Britain
29	Rev. Dr	Karen	BLOOMQUIST	Switzerland	Lutheran World Federation – Director, Department for Theology and Studies
30	Dr.	Reinhard	BODENMANN	Switzerland	Accompanying Person
31	Dr.	Stephen	BROWN	Switzerland	Lutheran World Information/ Ecumenical News International
32	Ms.	Margrit	KELLER	Switzerland	Lutheran World Federation –Europe Desk
33	Rev.	William	STREHLOW	Switzerland	Accompanying Person
34	Rev. Dr.	Eva-Sibylle	VOGEL-MFATO	Switzerland	Lutheran World Federation – Europe Secretary

20 YEARS AFTER THE SYSTEM CHANGE – CHURCH AND STATE IN SOCIETIES IN TRANSFORMATION

LWF European Consultation in Budapest/Hungary, June 26 – 29, 2009

Program

Friday, June 26, 2009

Arrivals in the morning

14:00 Welcome by the host church: Tibor Fabiny

Highlights from 4 sub-regional workshops in Europe:

Annette Leis-Peters: Workshop in Moravske Toplice, Slovenia, 2006

Gábor Orosz: Workshop in Svätý Jur, Slovakia, 2007

Linards Rozentals: International Conference on Church and State in Post-Soviet Countries 15 Years After Perestroika, St. Petersburg, Russia, 2008

Per-Kristian Aschim: Workshop in Leeds, United Kingdom, 2008

15:30 Coffee break

16:00 **East – West integration – a case study**
Marianne Subklew: Out of a niche onto the market – changes in the Protestant churches in Eastern Germany after the peaceful revolution

18:00 **Opening Worship**

Preacher: Deputy Bishop Marianna Szabóné Mátrai

Dinner

Saturday, June 27, 2009

8:30 Morning devotion: Dr. P. Bartimawus

9:00 **European context in transformation**

G. Robbers: New forms of pluralism as challenging and transforming factors

I. Thorson Plesner: Models of state relations to religion in Europe: A comparative and human rights perspective (a power point presentation)

10:30 Coffee break

11:00 Thematic working groups

12:30 Lunch

14:00 R. Noll: **European Union legislation and its impact on churches**
(a power point presentation)

15:30 Coffee break

16:00 D. Heidtmann: Stand up for justice!
Social responsibility of the Protestant churches in Europe

Table groups/plenary discussion

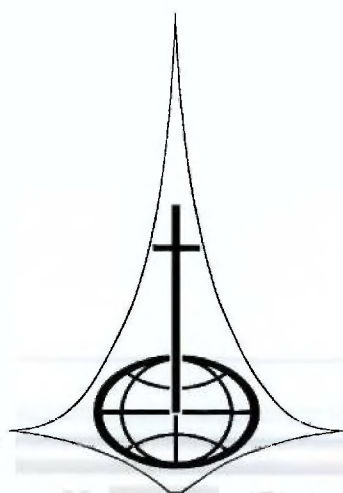
18:00 Evening devotion: L. Ruzeková

Sunday, June 28, 2009

- 9:00 Visit of Budapest Castle Hill with Ms.
G. Szabó-Papp
- 11:00 Sunday worship in Evang.-Luth. Church
at Bécsi kapu tér (Castle Hill)
Preacher: Bishop Dr. T. Fabiny
- 13:00 Lunch
- 14:00 **Privatized versus public religion, and
civil society**
R. Long: A British perspective
Respondents: Strengths of the church as
actor in civil society
Dieter Kampen: A majority and a minor-
ity church– 2 case studies from Italy
Enoh Seba: The Free Sunday Campaign
– a case study from Croatia
Alain Hazoumé: The situation in France:
a church on the move
- 15:30 Coffee break
- 16:00 Thematic working groups
- 18:00 Evening devotion: A.-S. Guerrier-Hahn
Dinner

Monday, June 29, 2009

- 8:30 Morning devotion: E. Ratz
- 9:00 **Lutheran spirituality as a gift to society**
Simon Sever: The Evangelical Church in
the Republic of Slovenia and its voice in
a modern open society
Eva Grollová: The role of diakonia in
society – The Central Eastern European
praxis
Peter Bartimawus: Lutheran spirituality
as a gift to society – a case study from
Nigeria
Thomas Yu: Twenty-two years of Martial
Law – A Lutheran reflection on changes
in Taiwanese society
- 10:30 Coffee break
- 11:00 Working groups
- 12:30 Lunch
- 14:00 **Adoption of conference message**
Summing up and follow up strategies in
the churches
- 15:30 Coffee break
Prayer for travels
Departures



THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION
– A COMMUNION OF CHURCHES